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NON-ROYALTY MYSTERY PLAYS

Compiled by
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Author of In the Days of the Han; The Merry Tales of Tyl Ulenspiegel; A World of Stories for Children (In collaboration with Barrett Clarke); Plays for Club, School and Camp; Around America with the Indian (In collaboration with Nina B. Lamkin); One Act Plays for Young Folks; Pantomimes for the Children's Theatre; Fairyland and Footlights; Penny Puppets, Penny Theatre and Penny Plays; Buffalmacco's Jest; The Pie and the Tart; The Farce of Pierre Patelin; The Cave of Salamanca; Doctors All; Jeppe of the Hills; Twenty-five Non-Royalty Plays; Twenty-five Holiday Plays; Twenty Non-Royalty Mystery Plays



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PREFACE

Mystery stories are popular among young people ranging in age from eight to eighty. They represent adventure plus the spiciness of the unknown and the thrilling that adds zest to the adventure. These are the main reasons for the endless collections of "Mystery Stories" which have been great favorites and which have fully stood the test of time.

But so far there has never been in print a collection of "Mystery Plays" of any kind which could be used for production in a theater, club, school, camp, or home where you have your "own theater"; or for reading.

Whenever I mentioned the idea to anyone, no matter what the age or sex, there was the greatest enthusiasm and a plea for such a collection. It was that and the very idea of such a book in itself that gave birth to this anthology. Soon enthusiastic playwrights were sending in their manuscripts and here is the result: the first collection of "Mystery Plays" for production and for reading.

The subjects range from the courtroom to the unexplainable —which is always explained satisfactorily at the end.

There are plays for very small casts and for large ones. There are plays in a single scene and some are divided into three scenes. There are plays to suit every taste and age.

No matter what type of play it is, it is not difficult to produce.

As I have said before, production of short plays which are given for but one performance, or perhaps two or three, should be put on as simply as possible and with an expenditure of as little time and money as possible. **RTNEC 33 '59**

Scenery should be reduced to the very minimum. Here again I repeat that the quickest and least expensive and, in a manner, the most picturesque kind of scenery for productions in Little Theatre, club, school, camp and home is attained by means of screens.

SOUTHWEST

Make or buy three sets of screens, each of two or three panels,

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MYSTERY AT THE DEPOT

BY ALBERT CARRIÈRE

CHARACTERS

LUKE HAIGHT, *the station master*

GEORGE MARVIN, *a traveler*

PAUL BLAKE, *Marvin's secretary*

LUCIUS BUTTS, JR., *a delicate young man*

PETERS, *a tramp*

INSPECTOR WILLIAMS, *a railroad detective*

Time: A few minutes after eleven o'clock on a winter night.
The play will act from thirty to forty minutes.

Place: A railroad station.

COSTUMES

Modern. A railroad cap is necessary.

PROPERTIES

Small black stove (can be painted on screen). Box. Chairs. Coal scuttle; some wood under it. Wooden benches. Newspaper. Lunch pail. Thermos bottle. Tennis racket. Hot water bottle. Two traveling bags. Two blankets. Small pillow. Bottle of smelling salts. Lantern. Wooden crate. Pocket knife. Hammer and screw driver. Two revolvers.

LIGHTING

The room is only dimly lit throughout the performance. The fire in the stove can be simulated with a red bulb.

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NOTES

The noise of the train can be found in records or can be imitated. A telephone ringing, of course, is very simple to reproduce.

THE PLAY

When the curtain rises we see Luke Haight sitting by the stove. He is reading a newspaper. His feet rest on the stove, and his chair is tilted back. On the box next to him rests an open lunch pail, a thermos bottle, containing coffee, and a railroad cap. He is absorbed in the paper, but manages to keep eating by reaching into the dinner pail and putting food to his mouth. As he is doing this the 'phone on the outside of the ticket window rings. Luke is annoyed. He leans far back and tries to reach the 'phone. He can't quite reach it. The 'phone continues to ring.

LUKE: Tarnation! I never knew it to fail! (*He gets slowly to his feet as the 'phone continues to ring.*) Every time I get set to eat my dinner, danged if that darn 'phone don't commence to ring! All right! All right! (*He picks up the receiver.*) Hello? Of course it's me! Who else could it be? What? Well, go ahead and talk! I'm listening, ain't I? (*He nods his head and listens very attentively.* While he is doing this, Peters walks quietly in by the door, left. Luke Haight does not see him. Peters stands watching Luke for a moment.) No! There ain't no box here that answers that description. (*Peters takes a quick look around. Then he walks silently across the room, and disappears into the half-open door of the ticket office.*) Yes! If it comes, I'll look after it all right! That's what I'm getting paid for, ain't it? Spoil? Mister, there ain't nothing ever spoiled here yet! If a thing's well packed, it don't spoil none! Good-bye! (*He hangs up the receiver and goes back to his chair.*) Never heard anything so silly! Big box! Has lots of food in it! Doesn't want it to spoil! Danged old fool! What's he take me for—a refrigerator? (*He sits down, picks up the thermos jug and takes a long drink.*) Ah! (*He wipes his mouth on his sleeve.*) Now for a little rest and quiet. (*He picks up a sandwich, is about to take a deep bite. The 'phone rings again.*)

Gol darn that infernal thing! What's the matter with it to-night? (*He rises, goes angrily to the 'phone. Picks up the receiver.*) Hello? Yes, it's me! Whodyou think it was? Yes, I'm the station master. A box? Say, are you the fellow that just called two minutes ago? Wanted to know if there was a big box here? Yes . . . just two minutes ago. What'd he look like? (*Angrily.*) How do I know what he looked like? I ain't found any way yet of seeing over the 'phone! (*He takes a bite of his sandwich.*) Yes, go ahead! I'm listening! (*As he stands chewing and nodding his head, the door to the ticket office is closed.*) What? You want me to open that box when it comes? But the box ain't got here yet! Yes . . . there's a train due from the city in about ten minutes. But, mister, I ain't allowed to open no boxes! Nope! Not unless I get a special permit from— (*He shakes the 'phone.*) Hello! Hello! Well, don't hang up you danged fool! (*He shakes the 'phone again.*) Hello? (*He sets the 'phone down.*) Well, I'll be! (*He walks back to his chair.*) Wonder what's in that box? (*He scratches his head in perplexity.*) Well, 'tain't none of my business! (*He picks up the newspaper and resumes his reading. Inspector Williams enters noiselessly from the door, left.*)

WILLIAMS (*closes the door*): Hello, Luke.

LUKE (*almost falls backward in his chair*): What's that? (*He catches himself.*) Oh, it's you, Inspector! (*He puts the paper aside.*) You don't have to scare a fellow to death!

WILLIAMS: Sorry if I startled you, Luke. (*He takes a careful look around the station.*)

LUKE: I ain't seen you in a mighty long time, Inspector. What brings you to Danville Junction?

WILLIAMS: I'm here on business, Luke, here on business.

LUKE (*whistles*): You don't say? (*He looks sharply at the other.*) Has there been some more railroad thieving going on?

WILLIAMS: Well, not exactly thieving this time, Luke. Something else.

LUKE: Something else? (*Williams nods.*) What is it, Inspector?

WILLIAMS: I'm not at liberty to say right now, Luke.

LUKE: You ain't?

WILLIAMS: No.

LUKE (*hopefully*): Even if I promise not to tell a living soul?

WILLIAMS (*laughs*): Sorry, Luke. This is one time when I've got to keep mum!

LUKE: Shucks! (*He looks sharply at Williams again.*) Say! You're sure it ain't got nothing to do with a big box?

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WILLIAMS: A big box? (*He steps up to Luke.*) What do you know about a big box?

LUKE (*continues eating*): Well, Inspector! (*Drinks some coffee.*) I ain't at liberty to say!

WILLIAMS (*takes Luke by the collar*): I asked you a question, Luke Haight! What do you know about that box?

LUKE (*frees himself*): Well say! 'Tain't no use getting all upset about it!

WILLIAMS (*catches himself*): Luke, I haven't time to fool around. I'm here on railroad business, and you'd better tell me everything you know about that box—or. . . . (*He puts his hand in his coat pocket. The door to the ticket office swings slowly open.*)

LUKE: Well, Inspector . . . (*He takes a bite out of a sandwich.*) about two minutes before you came in and nearly scared me to death, the 'phone rang. Somebody wanted to know if there was a big box here.

WILLIAMS: Was it a man or a woman? (*The door to the ticket office swings slowly closed.*)

LUKE: A man . . . I guess. (*Rubs his chin.*) But his voice sounded kind of ladylike, if you know what I mean, Inspector.

WILLIAMS: Go on! What else?

LUKE: Well, I promised to look after the box if it came.

WILLIAMS: Is that all?

LUKE: No! there's more. (*Luke takes a drink of coffee.*) About a split second after the first fellow hung up, some other fellow called and wanted to know the same thing.

WILLIAMS: Did you get their names?

LUKE: Their names? (*He laughs.*) What would I want with their names? Why, say! If I asked all the people who called this station for their names, I'd never get any work done.

WILLIAMS: Has there been anybody around here today—strangers, I mean?

LUKE: I ain't seen none!

WILLIAMS: You're sure there's been no one at all hanging around the station?

LUKE (*stops and thinks for a moment*): Well, no—not unless it was the invisible man! (*He slaps his knee and laughs uproariously.*) Ha, ha, ha!

WILLIAMS (*looks uneasily around the station*): Luke, I told you I wasn't at liberty to say anything. But because the man we're after is such a desperate criminal, I'm going to let you in on a secret.

LUKE: What is it, Inspector?

WILLIAMS: That box is getting here on the eleven o'clock train.
The man who sent it is a criminal of the worst sort!

LUKE: Jumping crickets! (*He rises quickly.*)

WILLIAMS: And he's coming here tonight!

LUKE: Well . . . maybe I'd better be locking things up, just to
be safe . . . sort of.

WILLIAMS (*pushes Luke back into the chair*): Lock things up?
Of course not, Luke! That would spoil everything. You've
got to stay here and act as though nothing had happened!

LUKE: Me? (*He shakes his head.*) Well, I don't know now. I
ain't never been one for messing around with criminals. It
ain't safe!

WILLIAMS: Never mind that! Just listen to me, and I'll tell you
what's to be done. After the train arrives, I want you to bring
that box here in the waiting room.

LUKE: Here? What for? I usually put all the freight in the store-
room.

WILLIAMS: I don't care what you usually do! I've got to set a
trap! And you've got to help me! You get that box off the
train and bring it in here. Then I can get the drop on the
man, or men, who sent it.

LUKE: Say, Inspector! I don't mind taking a box off the train,
and carrying it in here—but I ain't gonna do another thing!
You'll just have to deal with that criminal yourself!

WILLIAMS: I intend to!

LUKE: Do you mind telling me what's in that box, Inspector?

WILLIAMS: I can't tell you that, Luke, because I don't know
myself.

LUKE: Do you suppose it's stolen goods?

WILLIAMS: I haven't any idea.

LUKE: G—gosh! Maybe it's a dead body! I read a detective story
once, and the fellow in that—

WILLIAMS (*sharply*): I told you I didn't know!

LUKE: All right, Inspector. 'Tain't no use getting worked up
about it, just 'cause I asked a few questions. (*He takes a drink
of coffee.*) I'm sure glad my wife fixed a lot of coffee tonight.
(*He holds out the thermos bottle to Williams.*) Like some?

WILLIAMS: No, thanks. (*He goes to the door and stands looking
out for a moment.*) What time was it when those calls came in?

LUKE: Oh . . . about ten-fifty, I reckon.

WILLIAMS: Ten-fifty? Doesn't the Down East Limited stop at
Glenwood at about that time?

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LUKE: The Limited? Lemme see . . . *(excitedly)* That's right, it does! *(He rises and stares at Williams.)* You don't think . . . ?

WILLIAMS: Yes! Those calls came from Glenwood. And one of the men who called you is the man who sent that box.

LUKE: You don't say? But if that box is on the train, what's the sense of calling me about it?

WILLIAMS: Just to make sure you'd be on the lookout for it.

LUKE: Pretty slick!

WILLIAMS: But what I want to know is this—who was the second man?

LUKE: G—gosh! I hope he ain't another criminal.

WILLIAMS: He may be.

LUKE: You mean there are two criminals coming in on the Limited?

WILLIAMS: That's exactly what I mean!

LUKE *(gathers up his things quickly):* Guess I'll get these things picked up.

WILLIAMS: Listen! *(They both stand listening for a moment.)* There's the train now!

LUKE: I don't hear nothing.

WILLIAMS: I can hear it. Listen! *(They stand listening again. This time there is the faint sound of an approaching train.)*

LUKE: I hear it now! *(He puts his lunch kit on the ledge outside the ticket window.)* I'll just leave this stuff here, and get out on the platform. *(The sound of the train gets closer. Luke picks up a lantern.)*

WILLIAMS: Don't forget what I told you, Luke! Bring that box here! Then get into your ticket office and stay there. Otherwise you're liable to get hurt.

LUKE: Just as you say, Inspector. I ain't one for inviting trouble! *(He sees his cap lying on the box.)* Shucks! I almost forgot my cap! *(He picks it up, puts it on. The train is getting closer now. Luke rushes to the door, left, and goes out. Williams watches him for a moment. Then he goes quickly to the 'phone, takes off the receiver.)*

WILLIAMS: Operator! Get me the City Terminal! Hurry! *(He waits for a moment. Offstage, left, can be heard the sound of a train coming into the station. It slows down and stops.)* Hello? Terminal Operator? Get me Darby! *(He waits for another moment. Peters comes quietly out of the door, right. Williams does not see him. Peters walks across the room and*

out of the door, left.) Darby? This is Williams. The train's just pulling in now! Don't worry! I won't let anything slip! And don't forget the 'plane at the country club! Two o'clock. Yes, I'll light a flare! Right! (He hangs up the receiver. Hearing somebody coming, he looks quickly around. He sees the door to the ticket office, opens it, walks in. For a moment the stage is empty. Then we hear the train starting up again. The sound of the train gradually disappears in the distance. Lucius Butts, Jr. enters. He is carrying a tennis racket, a hot-water bottle, a traveling bag, several blankets, and one small pillow. He walks into the waiting room, drops his things on the floor, and sits wearily on one of the benches.)

LUCIUS (sadly): Dear me! Dear me! (From his pocket he takes a bottle of smelling salts. He holds it up to his nose and inhales. As he is doing this, George Marvin enters. He is followed by Paul Blake, his secretary. Blake carries two traveling bags.)

MARVIN: Confound that conductor! I told him I wanted to get off at Danville Center, not Danville Junction! What are the railroads coming to?

BLAKE: But, Mr. Marvin, sir, there is no station at Danville Center.

MARVIN: What's that?

BLAKE: There is no railroad station at Danville Center. That's why we had to get off here at Danville Junction.

MARVIN: No station at Danville Center?

BLAKE: No, sir.

MARVIN: Ridiculous! Why don't they build one then?

BLAKE: I don't know, sir. (He sets the bags down on the floor and looks around the room.)

MARVIN (impatiently): Well! Well! What are we waiting for?

LUCIUS: Dear me! Oh, dear me! (He again holds the smelling salts up to his nose.)

MARVIN (looks at Lucius): What's the matter with you?

LUCIUS: I'm awfully sick . . . awfully sick! Oh . . . ! (He groans.)

MARVIN: What are you sick about?

LUCIUS: The trains . . . the trains . . .

MARVIN: Well, I don't blame you at all! I've never seen anything so inefficiently run as this railroad! Why, if I ran my business the way this road is run, I'd be bankrupt in a week! In a week!

LUCIUS: Oh, but I don't mean that! I'm train-sick.

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BLAKE: Train-sick?

LUCIUS: Yes . . . every time I get on a train I get deathly sick. It's ghastly!

MARVIN: Why don't you drive a car?

LUCIUS (*shrieks and covers his mouth with a handkerchief*): Oh! That's even worse!

MARVIN: You mean it makes you sick to ride in a car?

LUCIUS: Deathly sick! To be brutally frank, sir, every time I ride in a car I have to take along a little paper bag—just in case.

BLAKE: Oh, I say! That's too bad!

MARVIN: How do you ever manage to do any traveling?

LUCIUS: I don't know, I'm sure. (*He rises unsteadily.*) Permit me, sir, to introduce myself. I am Lucius Butts, Jr.

MARVIN: How do you do, Mr. Butts? My name is George Marvin. I'm in the butter business. I'm sure you've heard of the Marvin Dairy Products! You know, Marvin's marvelous mellow butter! Good for the kiddies! (*Lucius bows.*) And this is Paul Blake, my private secretary.

BLAKE: How do you do, Mr. Butts?

LUCIUS: I'm very happy to know you, Mr. Blake. (*He sways slightly, then quickly drops to the bench.*) Oh, dear! (*He sniffs at the smelling salts.*) I'll never get to Canada at this rate.

BLAKE: Canada?

MARVIN: Don't tell me you're going to Canada?

LUCIUS: Yes, I must! Mamma is expecting me.

BLAKE: But how can you get there if it makes you sick to ride in trains?

LUCIUS: I'll manage—somehow. You see, every time I get sick I just get off the train until I feel better. Then I get on the next train, and I stay on it until I feel sick again. And so on!

MARVIN: Great Scott, man! That's a terrible way to travel! How do you ever manage to get anywhere?

LUCIUS: Oh, just perseverance—perseverance! And smelling salts!

BLAKE: How long have you been traveling, Mr. Butts, if I may ask?

LUCIUS: Certainly, Mr. Blake. (*He sighs deeply.*) I left New York three weeks ago.

BLAKE, MARVIN (*together*): Three weeks ago!

LUCIUS: Yes. . . .

MARVIN: And you've only come two hundred miles?

LUCIUS: That's all! (*He sighs and takes another sniff of the salts.*)

BLAKE: But at this rate, when do you expect to get to Canada?

LUCIUS: If my strength holds out, I expect to get there by the middle of next month.

MARVIN: Next month?

LUCIUS: Yes. You see, Mr. Marvin, that will be Mamma's birthday. And I've never yet disappointed Mamma on her birthday.

MARVIN: By George! That's a wonderful sentiment! (*Turns to Blake.*) A wonderful sentiment!

BLAKE: Oh, yes indeed!

LUCIUS: Well, I just don't want to disappoint Mamma!

[Luke appears in the doorway, left. In one hand he carries the lantern. With the other, he drags a large wooden crate after him. The three men turn and look at him.]

MARVIN: Look here, my good man, what's the quickest way to get to Danville Center?

LUKE (*drops the end of the crate*): Danville Center?

MARVIN: That's what I said, Danville Center!

LUKE: Well . . . (*He backs away from the others towards the door, right.*) the best way to get there is to drive.

MARVIN: Now that's more like it! How can I get a taxi?

LUKE: That's the trouble! (*He sets the lantern down on the floor.*) There ain't none!

MARVIN: What? No taxi?

LUKE: Not for miles.

BLAKE: Then how are we going to get out of here?

LUKE: I don't know, mister.

LUCIUS: Surely there must be some means of transportation.

LUKE: Well, you can always walk.

MARVIN: I, George Marvin, walk?

BLAKE: How far is it to Danville Center?

LUKE: Well . . . if you go by the Mill Road it's nigh on to eighteen miles.

BLAKE: Eighteen miles? Isn't there a shorter way?

LUKE: Well, now! (*He spits into the coal scuttle.*) If you go by way of Fool's Mountain it's only thirteen miles.

MARVIN: Fool's Mountain?

LUCIUS: Why do they call it that?

LUKE: Well . . . years ago there was a murder committed up

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at the top of that mountain. And ever since that time there ain't nobody had the courage to go up there alone at night, nobody but fools!

LUCIUS: How simply too thrilling!

BLAKE: And has nobody ever gone up on Fool's Mountain within recent years?

LUKE: Only fools! Two years ago there was a young surveyor fellow who said he'd go up. Well, he did. . . . (*In a ghostly voice.*) And he ain't never been heard of since!

MARVIN: Nonsense! I don't believe a word of it!

LUKE: Well . . . (*He spits into the coal scuttle again.*) It's the truth, mister.

BLAKE: It sounds rather morbid.

LUCIUS: I adore to be morbid!

MARVIN (*to Luke*): Now look here, Mr. Station Master! I want to know if you expect us to walk the thirteen miles to Danville Center?

LUKE: I ain't said I wanted you to walk at all, mister. I'm just answering your questions.

[*Peters enters the door, left. He stands staring at the box for a minute. Then he turns to Luke.*

LUKE: What do you want?

PETERS: Can I stay here for a minute, please, and get warm?

LUKE: No! you can't! You just better git along out of here! We don't allow no tramps to hang around the waiting room!

PETERS: It's very cold out. It won't take me long to get warm. Please let me stay a couple of minutes.

LUKE: Couple of minutes be derned! You git! (*Peters starts to leave.*)

LUCIUS (*rises*): One moment! I demand that you allow this man to remain here!

LUKE: What's that? Me let a tramp use this waiting room for a boudoir? I guess not!

LUCIUS: As a stockholder of this railroad, I insist that you allow this—this gentleman to remain!

LUKE (*uneasily*): Well . . . all right if you say so, mister. (*He glares at Peters.*) But don't you be up to any tricks!

PETERS: Thank you. I'll just sit here by the stove. I won't be in the way. (*He sits by the stove and warms his hands.*) It's very cold out.

BLAKE: Yes, it is.

LUCIUS: Perhaps you'd like to use one of my blankets? (*to*

Marvin and Blake) I always carry these blankets with me, just to be on the safe side. One never knows when one is going to take a chill, does one?

MARVIN: No, I suppose not.

LUCIUS (*holds a blanket out to Peters*): Perhaps you'd like this one?

PETERS: No, thanks. The stove will do.

MARVIN (*to Luke*): What I want to know is how we're going to get out of this place?

LUKE: I don't know, mister.

BLAKE: Is there a hotel or boarding house in the neighborhood?

LUKE: Nope!

LUCIUS: There must be a hotel or boarding house somewhere!

LUKE: Well, there ain't!

MARVIN: But we can't stay here all night!

LUKE: No, you can't! It's against railroad regulations! We ain't suppose to allow any loitering around the depot.

LUCIUS: Oh, but you must allow us to stay here!

LUKE: Well . . . I don't know now. . . .

LUCIUS: Where else can we go?

BLAKE: Look here. Can't we call somebody and have a taxi pick us up?

LUKE: The nearest place to call is Glenwood. And there ain't no taxis there. It's too small a town.

MARVIN: I've never heard anything so ridiculous! What do people do who want to get somewhere?

LUKE: They just don't come to Danville Junction, mister!

MARVIN: I don't see why we can't—(*He is interrupted by shouting offstage, right. A man's voice is heard shouting: Help! Help!*)

LUKE: What's that?

BLAKE: It's somebody shouting! Calling for help!

MARVIN (*starts for the door*): Come on!

BLAKE: Just a minute!

LUCIUS: Mercy! (*The voice continues to call: Help! Help!*)

BLAKE: Somebody's in trouble! (*He picks up Luke's lantern.*) Let me take this lantern. (*He and Marvin go to the door.*)

MARVIN: Come on, man! (*He and Blake leave.*)

LUCIUS (*stands and stares at Luke*): Why don't you go out with them?

LUKE: Not me! I ain't going out there!

LUCIUS: Why not?

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LUKE: Listen, mister! I don't know who you are! But I'm mind-ing my own business!

LUCIUS: A splendid idea! But if some poor soul is in trouble, don't you think it's your duty as the station master to in-vestigate?

LUKE: Even so, I'm staying right here! (*He looks suspiciously at Lucius for a moment.*) If you're so derned anxious to help people, mister, why don't you go out there?

LUCIUS: I'm sure I'd be no use whatever! But I do think you ought to go and see what it is?

LUKE: I ain't going!

LUCIUS: After all, if something happens in the vicinity of the depot, it's your responsibility.

LUKE: Well . . . maybe you're right, mister. (*He starts to-wards the door, left.*) I'd like for you to keep an eye on that box while I'm gone. (*He points to Peters.*) And keep an eye on him too. (*He leaves by the door, left. After he is gone, the two men in the room look at each other. Lucius points to the box. Peters nods his head. He rises, takes a quick look around the station, then starts towards the box.*)

LUCIUS (*nervously*): Hurry! There isn't much time!

PETERS: Keep your shirt on! (*He takes a knife from his pocket, opens it, and is about to pry open a corner of the box. Williams pushes open the door to the ticket office, and enters the waiting room. Peters quickly puts the knife away.*)

WILLIAMS (*looks suspiciously at Peters, then at Lucius*): Who are you?

LUCIUS: I?

WILLIAMS: Yes, you!

LUCIUS (*sadly*): I am a poor, weary traveler.

WILLIAMS: Oh, yeah? (*He turns to Peters.*) Who are you?

PETERS: Just a tramp.

WILLIAMS: What are you doing in this waiting room?

LUCIUS: It's all right! I told him he could stay.

WILLIAMS: You did? By whose authority?

LUCIUS: As a large stockholder on this railroad, I insist that this gentleman be allowed to remain.

WILLIAMS: Isn't that sweet? (*He jerks his head towards the door.*) Beat it, bum!

PETERS: I was only getting warm.

WILLIAMS (*his hand thrust into his coat pocket*): I said beat it!

PETERS: Yes, sir. (*He walks slowly across the room to the door.*)

left. Williams watches him carefully. After Peters has gone, Williams turns to Lucius.)

WILLIAMS: Now, Mr. Stockholder, what are you doing here?

LUCIUS: I had to get off the train because I was train-sick.

WILLIAMS: What?

LUCIUS: Trains always make me sick.

WILLIAMS (*angrily*): Listen! Don't give me any of that stuff! What are you doing here?

LUCIUS: I told you! I'm very sick! (*He holds up the smelling salts.*) Deathly sick!

WILLIAMS: You're a liar! You're no sicker than I am! (*He goes up to Lucius.*) You came after that box!

LUCIUS: Box? What box?

WILLIAMS: You know what box! Now come on, quit the stall-ing!

LUCIUS: Stalling? (*He looks in innocent surprise at Williams.*) My dear sir, I'm afraid I don't quite understand what you mean?

WILLIAMS: If I clip you one on the jaw, you'll understand! (*He moves threateningly towards Lucius.*)

LUCIUS (*retreats*): Heavens! Do you mean—you'd hit me?

WILLIAMS: If I had to, yes! (*He stands glaring at Lucius. Luke, Marvin and Blake enter the waiting room from the door, left.*)

LUKE: Well, mister, we couldn't find anything!

MARVIN: Somebody's playing a joke on us!

WILLIAMS (*looks suspiciously at Blake and Marvin*): Who are you?

MARVIN (*haughtily*): I?

WILLIAMS (*angrily*): Yes, you!

MARVIN: And what right do you have to ask that question?

WILLIAMS: I'd advise you not to get fresh, wise guy! (*He steps menacingly towards Marvin.*)

MARVIN: And I'd advise you to keep a civil tongue in your head!

WILLIAMS: Are you going to tell me who you are, or do I have to put you under arrest?

MARVIN: Put me under arrest? What for?

LUKE (*uneasily*): Mr. Williams, here, is a railroad inspector!

BLAKE: Railroad inspector? You mean a detective?

WILLIAMS: Yes, a detective.

LUCIUS: A real detective?

WILLIAMS (*turns angrily to Lucius*): Yes, a real detective!

LUCIUS: How simply too thrilling!

MYSTERY AT THE DEPOT

WILLIAMS: Now I want you three guys to sit over there on that bench! (*Marvin and Blake sit on the bench with Lucius.*)

MARVIN: What do you want with us?

WILLIAMS: I'm going to ask you a few questions. And I'd advise you to tell the truth!

LUCIUS: I always tell the truth! Always!

WILLIAMS: Which one of you called this station from Glenwood tonight? (*The men look at each other, but do not answer.*)

LUKE: Somebody called from Glenwood. I answered the 'phone myself.

WILLIAMS: Shut up, Luke! (*He turns to the three men again.*) I want to know which one of you made that call tonight!

MARVIN: I don't know what you're talking about!

LUCIUS: Nor I!

BLAKE: Neither I nor Mr. Marvin got out of the train at Glenwood.

WILLIAMS (*to Lucius*): That leaves you! You must be the one!

LUCIUS: I most certainly am not the one!

WILLIAMS: What do you take me for, a half-wit?

LUCIUS: If you wish!

WILLIAMS: Oh, a wise guy, eh?

LUCIUS: I object to being called names—even if you are a detective!

WILLIAMS: Isn't that too bad?

LUCIUS: It happens that I, Lucius Butts, Jr., am a large stockholder of this railroad. As soon as I get back to the city, I shall report you to the proper authorities!

WILLIAMS: Mister, you're breaking my heart! (*He makes an angry, impatient gesture.*) Now you guys listen to me, all of you! Somebody sent that box here from New York. And whoever did it is a murderer!

BLAKE: A murderer!

LUKE: Land o' Goshen!

LUCIUS: Mercy!

MARVIN (*quietly*): How do you know, Inspector?

WILLIAMS: Well . . . because it's my business to know these things! And it's also my business to find out which one of you is the murderer. And I'm going to do it!

LUCIUS: Don't look at me! I haven't murdered anybody!

WILLIAMS: Luke!

LUKE: Yes, Inspector?

WILLIAMS: Get me a hammer and chisel!

LUKE: What for?

WILLIAMS: We're going to open that box!

BLAKE: What's in that box, Inspector?

WILLIAMS: I don't know. But I'm going to find out!

LUKE: I wouldn't start fooling around with anything like this if I was you, Inspector! I read a detective story once. The fellow in that opened a box and found a dead man in it! Yes, siree! Dead as a doornail!

WILLIAMS: Hurry up and get that hammer!

LUKE: Well . . . all right, Inspector. But I ain't staying around here while you open that thing. No sir, Bob! I ain't hankering to rub elbows with no dead person—not at my age!

WILLIAMS: Will you get that hammer?

LUKE: Yes, sir. . . . (*He goes into the ticket office.*)

MARVIN: Frankly, Inspector, I can't see the sense of all this. Supposing one of us is, as you say, the murderer, what good will it do to open that box?

WILLIAMS: I don't know. I'm only acting on a hunch.

LUCIUS: It all sounds rather fantastic to me.

BLAKE (*anxiously*): Must I stay here while you open it?

WILLIAMS: Yes! We're all staying here!

LUCIUS: Oh, I say! I can't bear the sight of a corpse! I get goose pimples all over!

WILLIAMS: What makes you think it's a corpse?

LUCIUS: Well, I don't know. But if one of us is a murderer, and if the murderer sent this box—why then it's apt to be a dead body. (*He turns to Blake.*) Don't you think so, Mr. Blake?

BLAKE: No, I don't think it follows at all.

LUCIUS: But why not?

BLAKE: No man clever enough to commit a murder and get away with it is also stupid enough to put the body in a box, ship it somewhere, and then follow it.

LUCIUS: I see what you mean.

MARVIN (*quietly*): Unless the box contains something else. . . .

LUCIUS: Something else? What do you mean, Mr. Marvin?

MARVIN: If that box contains a body—or part of a body—it also contains something else.

WILLIAMS: How do you know so much about it?

MARVIN: I don't! I'm only guessing. But I'd say that it contains something of great value—perhaps stolen money or jewelry. Otherwise, why would the murderer follow it here?

LUCIUS: Your reasoning seems sound to me, sir.

LUKE (*enters from the ticket office carrying a hammer and screw-driver*): I couldn't find a chisel, Inspector. This screw-driver will have to do.

WILLIAMS: All right, Luke. Get to work!

LUKE: Get to work? Who—me?

WILLIAMS: Yes, you!

LUKE: But, Inspector! I don't want to go fooling around with no corpse!

WILLIAMS: Open that box, Luke!

LUKE: Tarnation! I don't want to, Inspector!

WILLIAMS (*firmly*): Open that box!

LUKE (*unhappily*): Yes . . . sir. (*He begins to work on the crate. The men watch him.*) I sure hope it ain't what I don't want it to be!

WILLIAMS: Maybe when we get that thing opened up, one of you guys will talk.

MARVIN: And maybe we won't.

LUKE (*as he tries to lift up a board*): It's kind of hard to open. . . .

WILLIAMS: Come on! Hurry!

LUKE: I'm hurrying just as fast as I can, Inspector! But whoever put this thing together sure knew his business! (*He hesitates, then looks around at the men for a moment.*) Are you sure you still want me to open this, Inspector?

WILLIAMS: Of course I'm sure!

LUKE: You ain't changed your mind?

WILLIAMS: No, I haven't! Now stop talking and get to work!

LUKE: All right, all right. No harm asking. (*He is about to resume his work on the box when suddenly from outside the open window the silhouette of a man's head is seen under a dim yellow light. Luke sees it and stares, paralyzed with fear.*) L—look! (*He points to the window. The men all turn to the window. Lucius screams.*)

WILLIAMS: Stand where you are! (*The figure disappears. Williams fires two shots after it. Then he turns back into the room.*)

BLAKE: What was that?

LUKE: It looked like a—a ghost!

LUCIUS: Merciful heavens! (*He falls forward. Marvin and Blake catch him and support him.*)

BLAKE: Steady there, old man!

MARVIN: Good Lord! He's fainted!

LUKE: Well, I don't blame him one bit! I feel kind of like fainting myself.

WILLIAMS (*disgusted*): What is he, a man or a mouse?

MARVIN (*as he and Blake lay Lucius out on the bench*): I'd say that he was just a highly strung young man. (*Blake puts a blanket over Lucius.*)

WILLIAMS: Get on with that box, Luke.

LUKE: Yes . . . sir. (*He pulls a board off the box.*) It's coming. . . .

MARVIN (*as he and Blake try to bring Lucius to*): He doesn't seem to be coming out of it.

BLAKE: He'll be all right if we can find the smelling salts he had.

WILLIAMS (*sharply*): Never mind that! You two stand over there in the corner.

MARVIN: What for?

WILLIAMS: I'm giving orders around here, not answering questions. Now stand over there!

BLAKE: But don't you think we ought to— (*Williams draws out a revolver.*)

WILLIAMS: Shut up! (*He motions them into a corner.*) All right, Luke. Tell us what's in that box.

LUKE (*as he rips another board off*): Well . . . it looks kind of like something wrapped up in a lot of newspapers.

WILLIAMS: Is there anything else?

LUKE: No . . . just newspapers.

WILLIAMS: Find out what's in those newspapers, Luke!

LUKE: Look here, Inspector, I don't mind opening a box, but when it comes to—

WILLIAMS (*points his gun at Luke*): Do as I say!

LUKE: Yes, sir. (*He starts to open one of the papers.*)

BLAKE: Stop!

WILLIAMS: What's the matter with you?

BLAKE: Don't open those bundles! I can't stand it!

MARVIN: Why not, Blake?

WILLIAMS: Yes, why not?

BLAKE: I don't know . . . I'm just suddenly afraid!

MARVIN: Nonsense, man! Pull yourself together! There's nothing to be afraid of!

WILLIAMS: Go on, Luke! Open those papers!

LUKE: Yes, sir . . . (*He leans forward to continue his work, when suddenly a knocking is heard. Luke jumps up, startled.*)

BLAKE: What's that?

MARVIN: It sounds like somebody knocking.

WILLIAMS (*looks around the room*): Who's doing that?

BLAKE (*screams*): Stop it! Stop it!

VOICE: I am the spirit of one who was killed by a man in this room. . . .

BLAKE (*frightened*): Get away! Get away!

VOICE (*as the knocking continues*): I shall not rest until justice is done. . . .

LUKE (*falls to his knees*): I ain't done nothing, Mr. Spirit! Honest to God, I ain't!

VOICE: Have the guilty one bow his head. . . .

BLAKE: I didn't do it! I didn't do it!

MARVIN: This is uncanny!

WILLIAMS: That's what you think! (*With a sudden movement he goes to where Lucius lies. He rips off the blanket. Lucius is caught knocking on the wall.*) You rat! (*He covers Lucius with his gun.*) Try to pull a fast one on me, will you?

MARVIN: Mr. Butts! (*He turns to Blake.*) I thought the voice sounded familiar.

LUKE: Well, I'll be derned! One of them ventriloquist fellows!

MARVIN (*laughs*): That's one on you, Inspector!

BLAKE (*sits weakly on the bench*): I'm afraid I don't appreciate the joke.

WILLIAMS (*takes Lucius and shoves him roughly towards the ticket office*): Get over there, you dime-novel hero!

LUCIUS: Please, sir! Don't hurt me! (*He tries to hold his ground.*)

WILLIAMS: Shut up! (*He hits Lucius a hard blow with his fist. Lucius falls to the floor and lies still.*)

MARVIN: Look here, Inspector! I don't think that was necessary!

WILLIAMS (*turns to Marvin and Blake*): You keep your mouth shut! (*He covers them with his gun.*) Stay where you are, and don't try any tricks! (*He turns to Luke.*) Now, Luke, get back to those bundles!

LUKE: Aw, Inspector, I—

WILLIAMS (*shoves the gun in Luke's ribs*): Open up those bundles!

LUKE: Y—yes, sir. (*He goes to the box, starts to open one of the packages.*)

WILLIAMS (*suddenly*): Not that one, you fool! Open only those tied with red string!

LUKE: What? (*He stares at Williams in surprise.*) Yes . . . sir.

(*He opens a small bundle, revealing a black jewel case.*) Well! Look at this!

WILLIAMS: Give that to me! (*He snatches it from Luke.*)

MARVIN (*after he and Blake have looked knowingly at each other*): How do you know what bundles to open?

WILLIAMS: Three guesses, Mr. Sherlock Holmes!

BLAKE (*nervously*): Then you—you're the— (*He starts to rise.*)

WILLIAMS: Sit down! (*Blake sits.*) You guessed it! I'm the guy who sent this box!

MARVIN: Then you're also a murderer!

WILLIAMS: That's right! (*He stands behind Luke.*) Hurry up, Luke!

LUKE: Y—yes, sir. (*He is trembling so violently that Williams snatches the bundle from him impatiently, and puts the bundle under his arm.*)

WILLIAMS: There's one more, on the bottom. Get it!

LUKE: Yes, sir. . . . (*He reaches into the bottom of the box.*)

BLAKE (*to Williams*): What are you going to do with us?

WILLIAMS: I've got a little surprise in store for you, boys!

MARVIN: What do you mean?

WILLIAMS: You'll find out soon enough.

BLAKE: But I thought you were a detective?

WILLIAMS: I was until a month ago. But things got too hot for me in the railroad yards, and I had to get out. Well, a man's got to live! So I pulled one little job, then another—and finally this one. Only this was a big job, my first. The guy squawked. I had to shoot him! When the police got on my trail, I packed everything in this box and shipped it here. (*He stops for a moment.*) But I didn't expect to find it this crowded with cops when I got here!

MARVIN: Cops? Do you mean that you think we're policemen?

WILLIAMS: Listen, mister! I've been in the business long enough to smell a cop when I see one! And I know that one of you is hot on my trail!

MARVIN: Preposterous! I'm simply a business executive!

WILLIAMS: You're simple, all right, if you expect me to believe that!

LUKE (*takes a small bundle wrapped in papers out of the crate; nervously, he hands it to Williams*): Here it is. . . .

WILLIAMS: That's fine, Luke. (*He takes the bundle and puts it under his arm with the other.*) Now you stand over there with the rest of the boys.

LUKE: Yes, sir. . . . (*He walks over and stands by Marvin and Blake.*)

WILLIAMS: Boys, I'm really sorry I've got to do this! But one of you is a lousy G-man, and I can't afford to take any chances! So start saying your prayers now!

MARVIN: What do you mean?

WILLIAMS: When I count three I'm going to empty this gun. And when I get through, I'll be the only one alive in this room!

MARVIN: You wouldn't dare!

WILLIAMS: Wouldn't I? (*He raises his gun and points it at Marvin.*) Since your mouth is so big, I think I'll put you out of your misery first! Just watch me! (*He takes careful aim.*) One!

BLAKE: Don't shoot!

WILLIAMS: Stop yelling! That won't do you any good!

LUKE: You ain't gonna shoot me, are you, Inspector?

WILLIAMS: You, too, Luke!

LUKE: But I ain't no G-man!

WILLIAMS: No, but you know too much for my peace of mind! Two!

MARVIN: For God's sake! Listen to me! If it's money you want, I have plenty of it!

BLAKE: Yes! Yes! We'll give you money, lots of it! Only you mustn't— (*Suddenly the lights go out. There is a flash of fire from Williams' gun. Then from the door to the ticket office, right, four shots are fired in succession. There is the sound of a falling body. Somebody groans. The lights go up again. Peters is standing in the doorway, a smoking revolver in his hand. Williams lies on the floor by the door, left. The bundles lie scattered on the floor.*)

PETERS (*quietly*): That was pretty close!

LUKE: Jiminy!

MARVIN (*to Peters*): Who are you?

PETERS: Oh, just a lousy G-man! (*bends over Williams and takes the gun out of his hand*)

LUKE: A G-man? You mean like in the detective stories? (*Peters nods.*)

MARVIN (*with a sigh of relief*): Well, this is one time I don't object to Government interference.

PETERS (*goes up to Lucius*): I wonder how my little playmate is? (*He lifts him to a sitting position.*) How are you, Lucius?

BLAKE: Is he a G-man, too?

PETERS: He is! One of the best in the business! (*Turns to Lucius, who is coming to.*) Feeling all right?

LUKE: Him a G-man? (*Rubs his chin in perplexity.*) Tarnation! It takes all kinds to make up this world—don't it?

LUCIUS (*in a normal voice*): I'm all right! Did you get Williams?

PETERS (*nods his head in the direction of Williams*): Take a look.

LUCIUS: Nice going, boy! You came just in time!

MARVIN: He certainly did!

BLAKE: Why, that fellow Williams was going to shoot us all—and in cold blood!

LUCIUS: Nice chap!

MARVIN: There's only one thing I don't understand. Who shouted for help while we were all in here?

PETERS: That was Williams.

LUKE: It couldn't have been, because I left him in here when I went out on the platform.

PETERS: He must have gone into your ticket office. I found the window open. That's how I got in again. Williams must have jumped out the window, shouted for help—and then jumped in again when he heard you coming. He did it to get us all out of here.

LUKE: Pretty slick! (*Rubs his chin again.*) Then who made them 'phone calls from Glenwood?

LUCIUS: I did!

LUKE: You?

LUCIUS: Yes. I wanted to be sure you'd get that box into the freight office before Williams got here.

MARVIN: Well, that solves almost everything. But there's one more thing I want to know. (*He walks towards the box.*) What's in that box?

PETERS: Nothing now. At one time there was a corpse in it. But we opened it at the city terminal and shipped the body to the morgue. We put the jewelry back into it, and filled it with rocks wrapped in newspapers.

BLAKE (*nervously*): Then it isn't—isn't a corpse?

PETERS: No, it isn't a corpse.

BLAKE: Thank goodness for that! (*He sits weakly on a bench.*) I—I feel terribly funny, as though I were going to faint.

LUCIUS (*rises*): Before you do, here's a present for you. (*He hands Blake the salts.*)

BLAKE (*takes the bottle*): Thank you. (*He holds it under his nose.*)

LUKE: Well, it beats all! (*He spits into the coal scuttle.*) That's all I can say!

PETERS (*takes a blanket and throws it over Williams' body, then turns to Lucius*): Well, Lucius, shall we call Washington and let the Chief know about Williams?

LUCIUS: It suits me! (*He feels the side of his head.*) Boy, what a punch that fellow packed! (*Peters goes to the phone.*)

PETERS: Hello! Hello! Operator?

LUKE: You know! This reminds me of a detective story I read once. The fellow in that shot another fellow! And he put his body in a great big box! (*He spits into the coal scuttle.*) Well, sir! Blamed if that box didn't get lost! (*The lights begin to dim now.*) And one day . . . the fellow who shot the other fellow was walking along a country road . . . and the first thing you know. . . .

[*The lights black out.*]

CURTAIN

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

BY SAMUEL COLERIDGE

Arranged in dramatic form
By M. JAGENDORF

THOSE IN THE FANTASY

THE WEDDING-GUESTS (*as many as you wish*)

FIRST GALLANT, *Wedding-Guest*

SECOND GALLANT, *Wedding-Guest*

NARRATOR

THIRD GALLANT, *Wedding-Guest*

THE ANCIENT MARINER

BRIDE

BRIDEGROOM

SAILORS (*as many as you wish*)

SPIRITS OF DEATH-FIRES (*as many as you wish*)

ONE SPIRIT, *dressed in white*

LIFE-IN-DEATH

DEATH

A TROUPE OF SPIRITS (*as many as you wish*)

TWO VOICES OF SPIRITS

SERAPH MEN (*one for each sailor*)

PILOT BOY

PILOT

HERMIT

Time: The play will last about forty-five minutes including intermissions, if you want them.

Place: On the sea.

COSTUMES

These are very simple suggestions for the costumes of the characters. They can be made quickly and without much cost.

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If you want them more elaborate and have the time and can afford the cost, you can do it.

Wedding-Guests, men, women, boys and girls: They are in costumes worn about 1850 or so. Hoop skirts, pantaloons, long coats, etc. You can make them of any other period and as fantastic as you wish.

The three Gallants: The first is dressed in red of the same period (or any other period). The second in blue and the third (who remains with the Ancient Mariner) in grey.

The Narrator wears a long grey or black gown.

The Ancient Mariner: A sailor costume. Blue pants and jacket, sailor hat.

Bride and Groom: Dressed like guests only more elaborate. The bride wears a veil; the groom holds a little old-fashioned bouquet (real or artificial) in his hands.

Sailors: Similar to Ancient Mariner.

Spirits of Death-Fire are dressed in black and red, flowing, full gowns.

One Spirit wears a white, full gown.

Death: Black shroud and a fleshless face mask on the face.

Life-in-Death: Long, full gown of soft blue and black material. The actor should also wear a mask one half of which is fleshless, like Death's and the other representing the laughing face of a young girl.

Troupe of Spirits: Long, white, blue, and pale pink gowns.

Seraph Men: Full, long crimson gowns.

Pilot and Son: Both wear sailor's costumes.

Hermit: Long gown and cowl of dark brown material.

PROPERTIES

Long table and chairs, heavy Gothic if possible. Dishes, center flowerpiece. Two tall candlesticks. Old-fashioned little bouquet. Records of songs and sound effects.

Albatross: Cut shape of bird out of stiff paper or cardboard. Mount it on a stick with a wire long enough to reach out from one side of the stage to the mast of the ship. You will thus be able to swing it in circles and in the directions which the script indicates. Arrange string on it in such manner that it can be tied later around the Mariner's neck.

Sun and Moon: Cut them out of cardboard, paint them the proper color and attach them to wires the same as the albatross.

You can then drop them and shift them as the action requires.

Crossbow: Can be made of wood or, what is easier, cut it out of cardboard.

Birds: The same as the albatross; you might just use "sounds" to indicate the birds.

Snakes and reptiles, green, glistening and slimy: Cut fantastic shapes like snakes and reptiles out of cardboard and paint them properly. Attach them to long thin sticks which you can push or pull in and out when they are required to be on the stage.

Masks: Make them of paper and paint them as the script indicates.

A whistle.

LIGHTING

The lighting in this play will have to be done with great care. The directions and the story tell of the changes and colors. At all times the light on the stage must be eerie—pale green or blue.

NOTES

This is a dramatic mystery-fantasy and should be produced in that spirit. Acting, scenery, costumes, lighting should all be done in an atmosphere of the mystery-dream-world. For this is the spirit of Coleridge's famous poem.

Perhaps the best way is to enact the whole performance in stylized manner. Lines should be scanned rather than spoken conversationally. All emphasis should be centered on the mystery and the beauty and the spirit of love and punishment which the poet created in his work.

In this work the stage director, those in charge of costumes, scenery, and lighting are fully as important as the actors who speak the lines.

There will have to be a perfect co-ordination of the action and the properties and, above all, the lighting. Moon and sun and lighting in general play an integral part of the story.

The music can, of course, be played from records. So can the sounds, like the shrieking of the wind and noise of the thunder, be produced from recordings. For the wind, you can also use a certain kind of whistle or you might have some one clever enough in your group to imitate it by mouth.

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The albatross, snakes, and reptiles can be cut out of cardboard, painted, and moved on sticks or wires—the same applies to the sun and the moon as described under "properties."

Choose the dance music you think fits the words of the play.

The faces of the sailors, spirits, etc. should be made up in blues and greens to look eerie and mysterious.

The Ancient Mariner wears a grey beard. Make this from grey rope on regular hair material which can be bought in any theatrical store. Music should be played almost throughout the play. The choice and volume of sound should be gauged by the lines and the action.

This play is a classroom project, and if there is no time to study the lines, they could be read from books. Just arrange it in such manner that it is not too obvious.

The opening lines of the play are taken from one of Coleridge's other poems.

More elaborate scenery can be made, of course. The only absolute requirement is that it is to be fantastic and in the spirit of the play.

SETTING

The scenery is carefully described at the beginning of the play. It is the very simplest and quickest that can be made, and will cost least.

THE PLAY

SCENE ONE *

The stage shows three screens each of two or three panels about half way up the stage. The one at the extreme left end is painted to suggest a tall Gothic room. High, multicolored windows of stained glass, heavy furniture, and a big fireplace. There might be the suggestion of a painting of the Crucifixion on the wall. Behind this screen there is a big table with tall chairs around it. On the table are arranged dishes for a festive meal with a flower centerpiece. There are tall candlesticks at each end of the table in which are burning candles.

* This is just the simplest suggestion for the scenery. You may substitute anything different which your own fancy suggests.

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The center screen shows a wharf and the sea. Against the screen is a box or a seat painted to resemble a big stone or a stump of a post.

The third screen is painted to look like an old rigger. Just copy the picture of such a ship. Alongside it stands the narrator. He is dressed in a long black gown. He may hold a book in his hand.

When the curtain opens it is full daylight. There is a low playing of a pleasant dance tune which can be done with a record. Some old English sailor song will be best.

From the right enter the Wedding-Guests, men and women, boys and girls (as many as you wish). They are dressed in fanciful costumes of about eighteen hundred, all in unusual style, and colors your fancy suggests. They dance or march slowly across the stage and go behind the screen at the extreme left. There they bow ceremoniously to one another and seat themselves stiffly around the table. Throughout, the music continues in subdued tone. Now and then during the performance, when the guests are mentioned in the action, they bend toward one another stiffly suggesting conversation. Otherwise, they sit absolutely still.

The music continues as the three Gallants, Wedding-Guests, enter, one behind the other. One is dressed in red, one in blue, and one in grey.

1ST GALLANT (*gaily*):

Now youths the breaking stages load
That swiftly rattle o'er the road.

2ND GALLANT (*pointing to where the Wedding-Guests are seated*):

With mirthful dance they beat the ground,
Their shouts of joy the hills resound.

[The Ancient Mariner enters dressed in sailor fashion. He has a long beard. He sees the three Gallants and listens to them intently.

3RD GALLANT: But little think their joyous hearts
Of dire misfortune's varied smart's
Which . . .

NARRATOR: It is an Ancient Mariner

And he stoppeth one of the three

[As the narrator speaks the lines, the Ancient Mariner goes

up to the third Gallant dressed in grey and stops him with up-raised hands.

3RD GALLANT: By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?
The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;

2ND GALLANT: The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.

[The Ancient Mariner holds the third Gallant by the arm.

NARRATOR: He holds him with his skinny hand.

ANCIENT MARINER: There was a ship—

3RD GALLANT: Hold off! Unhand me, grey-beard loon!

[The Ancient Mariner drops his hand.

NARRATOR: Eftsoon his hand dropt he.

[The second and first Gallants walk towards the chamber where the Wedding-Guests are assembled. The third Gallant stays behind. They try to attract his attention, call him. He follows them slowly for a few steps but the Ancient Mariner gets in front of him and stares straight at him. The third Gallant stops. The two Gallants join the other Wedding-Guests.

NARRATOR: He holds him with his glittering eye—

The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

[The third Gallant walks slowly up to where the stone is standing against the wharf and sits down on it.

NARRATOR: The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:

He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

ANCIENT MARINER: The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.
The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.
Higher and higher every day
Till over the mast at noon—

[The music plays louder. The third Gallant Wedding-Guest

who had only been partly listening looks distressed towards where the wedding-guests are sitting, tries to get up, but he does not seem to be able to do so. He beats his breasts and wrings his hands.

NARRATOR: The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

[The music plays louder and the Bride and Groom enter slowly, smiling happily. They do not look towards the Ancient Mariner, but they see the third Gallant Wedding-Guest.

They beckon to him and continue walking toward the Wedding-Guests. The third Gallant tries to get up again and again but some power seems to be holding him. He looks wildly around and beats his breast.

During this pantomime the following lines are spoken.

NARRATOR: The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.
The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

ANCIENT MARINER (*dramatic as the stage grows darker*):
And now the Storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,

[There is the sound of roaring winds.
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

[There is a pause. The wind subsides and it grows quiet.
And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
 Did send a dismal sheen:
 Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
 The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
 The ice was all around:
 It cracked and growled, and roared and
 howled,
 Like noises in a swound!

[An albatross flits across the ship and alights on the mast. As it does the following lines are spoken.]

ANCIENT MARINER: At length did cross an Albatross,
 Thorough the fog it came;
 As if it had been a Christian soul,
 We hailed it in God's name.

[The Albatross circles slowly around the ship.]
 It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
 And round and round it flew.
 The ice did split with a thunder-fit,
 The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
 The Albatross did follow,
 And every day, for food or play,
 Came to the mariners' hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
 It perched for vespers nine;
 Whilst all the night, through fog-smoke
 white,
 Glimmered the white moon-shine.

3RD GALLANT: God save thee, ancient Mariner,
 From the fiends, that plague thee thus!
 Why look'st thou so?—

ANCIENT MARINER (*picking up a crossbow which lies near him and aiming it at the circling Albatross*):
 With my crossbow
 I shot the Albatross.

[The stage darkens for a few seconds or the curtain might be closed. When it opens again the scene is the same, the characters are still in the same position except that against the third screen, the ship, several sailors are grouped.]

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER 31

ANCIENT MARINER (*as the sun passes around the ship from one end of the ship to the other in circular motion*):

The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

[*During these lines, the sailors on the ship raise their hands to their lips and hello in pantomime. They look in all directions in distress.*

ANCIENT MARINER: And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.

1ST SAILOR (*looking at the Ancient Mariner*):
Ah, wretch!

NARRATOR: said they

2ND SAILOR: The bird to slay

3RD SAILOR: That made
the breeze to blow!

ANCIENT MARINER: Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprise:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.

[*The sailors assent among themselves in pantomime.*

1ST SAILOR: 'Twas right

NARRATOR: said they

2ND SAILOR: Such birds to slay

3RD SAILOR: That bring
the fog and mist.

NARRATOR: The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;

ANCIENT MARINER: We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the seal!

[The sun is now in the center over the ship.

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot! O Christ!
That ever this should be!

*[The sun disappears slowly and a greenish light fills the stage.
Snakes with strange shapen heads pass around the ship.*
ANCIENT MARINER: Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

*[The Spirits of Death-Fire dressed in black and red come out
and dance in slow rhythm to the tune of weird music during the
next four lines. The lines are spoken in rhythm with the music
and the dance. One Spirit dressed in white stands quietly by
watching the rest.*

ANCIENT MARINER: About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.

And some in dreams assured were
Of the spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

[The Spirits fade out.
SAILORS (*chanting to the dance and the music, walking near the
Mariner. They look straight at him*):

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

[The sailors continue their walking around the Mariner as he speaks the next lines. At the third line, the first sailor picks up the Albatross which was lying on the ground and hangs it around the neck of the Mariner.

ANCIENT MARINER: Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

[He speaks the last few lines in fear and terror.

[The stage is dark for a few seconds, then it lights up again. The sailors are now sitting listlessly with staring eyes. The sun is over the ship.

ANCIENT MARINER: There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

[He looks eagerly into the distance.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

With throats unslaked, with black lips
baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, 'A sail! a sail!'

NARRATOR: With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,

ANCIENT MARINER: Agape they heard me call: (*in a joyous voice*)
Gramercy. . . .

[There is movement among the sailors; they look in the direction of the sail; they attempt to smile.

NARRATOR: They for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

ANCIENT MARINER (*pointing out*):

'See! see!' I cried, 'she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!'

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

Alas! thought I, and my heart beat loud,
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameress?

[*He peers tensely into the distance.*

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that Woman's mate?

[*Death, dressed in a black shroud with a mask of a fleshless skull, and Life-in-Death, dressed in pale blue diaphanous material, with a mask which shows on one side a laughing girl's face and on the other a death's skull, appear.*

ANCIENT MARINER: Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold,
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thickens man's blood with cold.

NARRATOR: The naked hulk alongside came.

[*Death and Life-in-Death begin throwing dice in pantomime. The crew falls back into listlessness.*

NARRATOR: And the twain are casting dice;

LIFE-IN-DEATH: The game is done! I've won! I've won!

[She whistles three shrill sounds.

NARRATOR: Quoth she and whistles thrice.

[The last words are spoken as she whistles. The sun goes down and stars appear.

NARRATOR: The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the specter-bark.

[The moon begins to appear and comes up as the lines suggest.

ANCIENT MARINER: We listened and looked sideways up!

Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed
white;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The horned Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

[The crew with agony in their faces look now and then at the Mariner.

ANCIENT MARINER: One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

[The crew drop down lifeless one after the other.

ANCIENT MARINER: Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my crossbow!

3RD GALLANT: I fear thee, ancient Mariner!

I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.—

ANCIENT MARINER: Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

[The snakes crawl across the sea and around the ship.]

ANCIENT MARINER: I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to Heaven and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea and the sea and the
sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to Hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is a curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

[The moon moves around the ship.]

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charméd water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes.

[The snakes and reptiles pass slowly around.]

They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire;
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

[Suddenly he looks wildly around; there is a change in the expression of his face. He looks up to the heaven.]

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware.
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

[The stage darkens for a few seconds and lights up again.]

NARRATOR: Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!

ANCIENT MARINER: To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent a gentle sleep from heaven,
That slid into my soul.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

[A roaring wind is heard.]

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear,
But with its sound it shook the sails
That were so thin and sere.

[There is a commotion in the air and birds fly swiftly through the air.]

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge,
And the rain poured down from one black
cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

[The sailors begin to move slightly and groan low.]

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

[*They rise slowly.*

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

[*They move about and work in pantomime as the lines direct.*

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up blew;

The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.

3RD GALLANT: I fear thee, Ancient Mariner!

ANCIENT MARINER: Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!

'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

[*A troop of Spirits dressed all in soft colored robes come lightly across the scene and stand by the sailors.*

For when it dawned—they dropped their
arms,

And clustered round the mast;

[*There is soft low music of a hymn as if sung far off, intermingled here and there with a bird's song.*

Where the lines indicate there is song of birds and instrument.

Sweet sounds rose slowly through their
mouths
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the Heavens be mute.

[The music stops.]

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon.
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length,
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swound.

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

A VOICE IN THE AIR: Is it he? (*pause*) Is this the man?
By Him He died on Cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The Spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.

NARRATOR: The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he:

SECOND VOICE: The man hath penance done
And penance more will do

FIRST VOICE: But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the Ocean doing?

SECOND VOICE: Still as a slave before his lord,
The Ocean hath no blast:
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him!

FIRST VOICE: But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?

SECOND VOICE: The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.

[The stage darkens or the curtain closes for a few seconds.]

When the stage lights up the sailors are grouped around the mast. The moon is shining.

ANCIENT MARINER: I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high,
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

[*His voice changes and he speaks more freely.*

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round, walks on
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring;
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too.
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

[The moon rises slowly and the sailors lie down on the deck.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The lighthouse top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbor-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbor-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colors came.

[The Spirits go off the stage and the Seraph Men, dressed in long crimson gowns, come in slowly and each one stands next to one of the sailors.

ANCIENT MARINER: A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

[The Seraph Men wave their hands in rhythm to low music.
This seraph-band, each waved his hand;
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand;
 No voice did they impart—
 No voice; but oh! the silence sank
 Like music on my heart.

[*The Seraphs go out slowly.*

PILOT (*outside*):

Yo ho! Yo ho! Yo ho!

ANCIENT MARINER: But soon I heard the dash of oars,
 I heard the Pilot's cheer;
 My head was turned perforce away,
 And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
 I heard them coming fast:
 Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
 The dead men could not blast.

[*The Hermit is heard in the distance singing a hymn.*

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
 It is the Hermit good!
 He singeth loud his goodly hymns
 That he makes in the wood.
 He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
 The Albatross's blood.

NARRATOR: This Hermit good lives in that wood
 Which slopes down to the sea.
 How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
 He loves to talk with marineres
 That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
 He hath a cushion plump:
 It is the moss that wholly hides
 The rotted old oak-stump.

ANCIENT MARINER: The skiff-boat neared; I heard them talk.

PILOT (*outside*):

Why, this is strange, I trow!
 Where are those lights so many and fair,
 That signal made but now?

HERMIT (*outside*):

Strange, by my faith!
 And they answered not our cheer!
 The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
 How thin they are and sere!

I never saw aught like to them,
 Unless perchance it were
 Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
 My forest-brook along;
 When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
 And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
 That eats the she-wolf's young.

PILOT: Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look!

NARRATOR: The Pilot made reply

PILOT: I am a-feared—

HERMIT: Push on, push on!

NARRATOR: Said the Hermit cheerily.

ANCIENT MARINER: The boat came closer to the ship,
 But I nor spake nor stirred;
 The boat came close beneath the ship,
 And straight a sound was heard.

[*There is a crashing noise.*

Under the water it rumbled on,
 Still louder and more dread:
 It reached the ship, it split the bay—
 The ship went down like lead!

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
 Which sky and ocean smote,
 Like one that hath been seven days drowned
 My body lay afloat;
 But swift as dreams, myself I found
 Within the Pilot's boat.

NARRATOR: Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
 The boat spun round and round;
 And all was still, save that the hill
 Was telling of the sound.

[*The Pilot and his son, dressed in sailors' clothes, and the Hermit, dressed in a long brown gown from which hangs a cowl, appear alongside the ship.*

ANCIENT MARINER: I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
 And fell down in a fit;

[*The Pilot Boy shrieks.*

NARRATOR: The holy Hermit raised his eyes
 And prayed where he did sit.

ANCIENT MARINER: I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,

Who now doth crazy go,
, Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.

PILOT BOY (*laughs wildly*):

Ha, ha! full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.

ANCIENT MARINER: And now, all in my own countree,

I stood on the firm land!

The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!

[*The Hermit crossed his brow.*

HERMIT: Say quick, I bid thee say—

What manner of man art thou?

ANCIENT MARINER: Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

[*There is a long pause; then, in a changed voice.*

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns;
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

[*He is silent and he stares into the distance. The Pilot, his son, and the Hermit go out.*

From behind the screen where the Wedding-Guests and the Bride and Groom are seated, the music is heard louder. There is the tinkling of bells and the humming of a tune.

NARRATOR: What loud uproar bursts from that door!

The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

[*The song and music become lower.*

ANCIENT MARINER: O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide, wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seeméd there to be.

Oh, sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

[The Ancient Mariner goes out slowly. Where the lines indicate the third Gallant Wedding-Guest walks slowly, head low, down in the other direction where the festivities go on. But he does not join them. He continues and goes off the stage.]

NARRATOR: The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the Morrow morn.

[The CURTAIN CLOSES.]



THE LATE MR. SCARFACE

By MILDRED HARK

and

NOEL McQUEEN

CHARACTERS

KAY BLAKE

TONY BLAKE

CROCKER (*might be a maid*)

Time: The acting time takes about twenty minutes.

Place: Any city.

COSTUMES

The costumes are all modern.

PROPERTIES

The properties consist of: living room furniture; breakfast dishes and newspapers. Also a tray, coffee pot and a rack of toast.

LIGHTING

For lighting the stage use full daylight.

SETTING and THE PLAY

The scene is the living room of Mr. Tony Blake's luxurious penthouse apartment. It is almost noon, and at a small table in front of the fireplace, Mrs. Blake is enjoying her breakfast. Kay Blake is beautiful and clever although she feigns dumbness sometimes to annoy her husband. She is dressed in a stunning negligee and as she eats she leafs through the morning newspaper. After a moment, Crocker, the butler, enters

center bearing a tray on which are a silver coffee pot and a rack of toast. Crocker clears his throat and Kay looks up.

CROCKER: I've brought some fresh coffee and toast, Madam.

KAY: Oh, thank you, Crocker.

[Crocker bows, removes a coffee pot from the table, and then places the fresh one near Kay. As he silently departs, Kay puts aside the paper and calls left.]

KAY: Tony! Tony, your breakfast is getting cold!

[You hear Tony's voice off.]

TONY (from off left): Coming!

[Tony enters left wearing bathrobe and slippers. He is smooth, sophisticated, witty, but at the moment he looks a bit dishevelled and he is yawning.]

TONY: You know I thought those people would never go home
—what time did we get to bed last night?

KAY: Hmmmm-m, you wouldn't know . . . It wasn't last night—
it was this morning, dear.

TONY: Yes—yes, it would be, naturally. Oh me, why do we do
these things?

KAY: Well, sit down and have some coffee—you'll feel better.

TONY: I doubt it, but it's a kind thought.

*[He groans a little as he eases himself into chair left of table
directly facing Kay. She pours a cup of coffee for him.]*

TONY: Well, now that you come directly into focus, I must say
you're looking extremely charming this morning, Mrs. Blake.

KAY: Thank you, Mr. Blake. Sorry I can't say the same for you!
Darling, you do look as though you needed something—
maybe you ought to have a facial.

TONY: Heaven forbid!

KAY (passes a platter): Well, then, have some toast. Have some
scrambled eggs—

TONY (He still isn't feeling so well, and he waves it away.): No
—no, thank you . . . What's that you're eating?

KAY: Cold salmon.

TONY: Ugh! (He makes a face but he does decide to drink his
coffee.)

KAY: You needn't look like that. I woke up this morning feel-
ing like cold salmon so I had Crocker fix me some.

TONY: Cold salmon for breakfast! Kay, my dear, that should
be sufficient cause for divorce.

KAY: Is that so? Well, I might get a divorce myself, if you don't

let me in on what's going on around here. What were you doing down at the penitentiary the other day?

TONY: Oh, thought I might pick up a little information from a couple of the boys. Where'd you hear about it?

KAY (*picks up the newspaper again*): It's right here in the paper. It mentions Johnnie McGraw's murder again, and then says you were seen visiting Mike Burnett at the pen . . . I don't think you ought to go down there—it's dangerous.

TONY: Why? They don't give 'em guns to play with, you know. . . . Another cup of coffee, please . . . (*passes his cup*) Oh, my head!

KAY (*pours his coffee*): Tony, what you need is a little relaxation—away from all this—and there's nothing like fresh air. Let's go to the races!

TONY: Not a chance! I've got work to do.

KAY: Oh, can't you let it go till tomorrow? I've got such a nice new dress!

TONY: Yes, it must be nice . . . I got the bill . . . What's it made of, U. S. treasury certificates?

KAY: Don't be silly—it was a bargain! An exclusive model for only sixty-nine fifty.

TONY: Yes, I said I'd seen the bill. That's just another reason why little Tony's got to have his wits about him today. We could use that two grand Cavalli promised me. Business before pleasure, my sweet.

KAY (*sighing*): Oh, I suppose so. . . . Have you decided how you're going to do it yet?

TONY: No, I haven't . . . I thought of a machine gun, but that won't do this time.

KAY: Why not?

TONY: Well, I'll explain. You know, it's so nice to have one's wife interested in one's work. So companionable, don't you think?

KAY: Yes, dear, but why can't you use a machine gun?

TONY: In the first place they go put-put-put—make a lot of noise—and the neighborhood where Scarface is hiding out is a tough one and naturally full of cops. They'd be sure to hear.

KAY: Oh, that would never do.

TONY: Exactly . . . And another thing about machine guns,

they're messy—splatter blood all over. Please pass the toast, darling. I'm definitely beginning to feel hungry.

KAY (*passes the toast*): Good! Maybe you'd like some salmon—

TONY (*takes a piece of toast*): No—no—not that hungry. Just a piece of toast, thank you. (*chewing*) Now, about Scarface—

KAY: Well, if you can't get rid of him with a machine gun, why don't you use poison?

TONY (*tilts his chair back, now and then chewing on the toast and now and then waving it in the air to illustrate a point*): No, that won't do either. In order for it to be effective, the person concerned has to swallow the poison.

KAY: But—

TONY: And if you were going to suggest putting it in his food, he's got a six months' supply right with him and there's no way of getting at it.

KAY (*getting an idea*): Then I know, darling! If you tap the water pipe going into a house, and put poison in it, whoever's inside will swallow some the first time he takes a drink!

TONY: Ah, yes, a brilliant idea—but aside from the difficulty of a man digging a hole in the city street, the object is to kill Scarface—not poison the entire neighborhood. You're always such a help, my love!

KAY: Thank you, darling . . . And really, you know, I think you must be slipping. There's no reason why you should have so much trouble this time. You've done it often enough before.

TONY: Kay, the way you said that. Makes me sound like such a cold-blooded fellow. Do you still love me?

KAY: Yes, I'm afraid so . . . But honestly, Tony, once in a while, this business of yours wears me down. Of course I knew all about you before we were married but sometimes it makes me so nervous I—I actually have nightmares!

TONY: Nightmares! Do you really? I'm so sorry. You ought to wake me up.

KAY: That would be impossible. Besides, I did scream the other night, and did you try to comfort me? No—you never even blinked!

TONY: Can you imagine my being so thoughtless! What were you screaming about?

KAY: About you. It was perfectly horrible, Tony! You were dangling from a scaffold with a rope around your neck—your head tipped to one side and your eyes bulging out—

TONY: Dear me, I can see I wasn't at my best . . . But after all, you've seen my face often enough—it shouldn't have frightened you.

KAY: Now, it's nothing to joke about! I've always been nervous at night. Mother says when I was a little girl, I used to see things in the dark, and now, being married to you, well, you can imagine how it affects me!

[*Tony, about to sip some more coffee, nervously jiggles his cup.*

KAY: Darling, you're spilling your coffee.

TONY: Of course I am—you're making me nervous, too. Shaking like a leaf, and it's all nonsense. I've got to be steady this afternoon. This thing's got us both upset, and it's perfectly simple. Thing to do is figure how it should be done, and then do it!

KAY: Yes, of course, and even though you don't think much of my suggestions, I'll try and help.

TONY: Good! Doting wife helps husband plan murder—make a nice headline, wouldn't it? But, be that as it may, let's consider the matter calmly. Scarface has to be bumped off, and he's up on the top floor of a three story building—so what suggestions have you got?

KAY: They'd see anyone going up the stairs, wouldn't they?

TONY: Naturally.

KAY (*leaning across the table*): Well, then—of course this is only a rash guess—but I think he'll have to be killed with a gun, a rifle with a Maxim silencer, from the building across the street.

TONY: Splendid—splendid—I can see you're improving, but in this case there is no building across the street.

KAY (*sitting back*): Oh!

TONY: But there is one nearby—let me illustrate. (*He rises and standing back of the table pushes some of the dishes aside. Then he picks up the salt shaker and places it in a prominent spot on the table at center.*) This salt shaker is the building where Scarface is hiding out and—hand me the pepper—(*she does so*) thank you! (*With a flourish he places the pepper where he wants it.*) We place that in back of and a little to the left of the salt—that's the other house!

KAY (*pointing*): Look, ~~dear~~, you've spilled some salt. Throw some over your shoulder quick!

TONY: Must you interrupt? You know I'm not superstitious

and besides, that is no longer salt—it's a little mound of dirt or something in front of Scarface's house.

KAY: Well, all right, but it'll be your funeral—not mine—if anything goes wrong.

TONY: Now, as I was saying—this other house here has a fire escape . . . (*He indicates the pepper shaker.*) Just try to imagine a fire escape up this side of the pepper, and you'll readily see that it affords a clear view of the hideout.

KAY (*in her excitement she raises her voice*): Oh, well, then, that's simple. The shot can be fired from there—have a Maxim silencer, like I said—and—

TONY (*looks worried, leans over the table, and lowers his voice*): My dear, you're getting excited. Is the butler in the kitchen?

KAY: Why, I don't know, dear.

TONY: Well, if we don't know, we'd better keep our voices down. (*He sits down again.*) Now, as for your rifle business . . . whereas a man might get away with dressing up like a janitor and climbing three flights of fire escape, a person'd never get away with it lugging five-feet of gun with another foot of silencer tacked on. There's a law against toting deadly weapons around city streets . . . No, darling, I can't do it that way.

KAY: Well, how about a pistol—with a silencer? Nobody'd notice that.

TONY: And neither would Scarface, because, my dear, there isn't a pistol made that would shoot that far.

KAY: Oh, dear, it's so discouraging! I'm beginning to think it's impossible—

TONY: Impossible? That, my dear, implies that something can't be done, and the word "can't" is not in the Blake vocabulary! Tony Blake has never been known to fail, and the tougher the going gets, the better he likes it! Why, Tony Blake—who is this fella, anyway? (*He rises and picks up his glass with a flourish.*) Let's propose a toast to him!

KAY (*laughing*): Tony, you fool! Sit down!

TONY: No—no, I insist. Pick up your glass, too! . . . I say, what is this I'm drinking?

KAY: Pineapple juice.

TONY: Hmm-mm—very nice . . . (*He sits down again.*) What—what did you say it was?

KAY: Pineapple juice.

TONY: Pineapple juice—pineapple ju—pineapple! (*He pounds the table.*) That's it. we'll use a pineapple!

KAY: Tony, what are you talking about? Use a pineapple for what?

TONY: To bump off Scarface!

KAY: Have you gone crazy?

TONY: No—no, you see, a pineapple is—is any kind of small bomb or hand grenade. You should know that, darling, being married to me. But anyhow, that'll do it. Don't you see? It's just a matter of climbing the fire escape and heaving it through one of the windows. It'll blow everything to bits, including Scarface.

KAY: Wonderful, but tell me this, how far apart are those buildings?

TONY: Hmm-m, you would bring that up. Yes—yes, I see what you mean. No. No man living could throw that far.

KAY: Sorry to be a wet blanket—maybe you'd better drink that toast after all . . . you might get another bright idea!

TONY (*pondering*): No, now, let me think. Seems to me as a boy I never had a gun, and I used to shoot objects at long distance. What did I use?

KAY: I'm sure I don't know.

TONY (*suddenly*): Well, I do—I used a sling-shot! And with a small-sized hand grenade, a good sturdy sling-shot should do the trick!

[Tony pushes back his chair, gets up enthusiastically and goes to Kay.]

TONY: That's got it! Give me a kiss, darling. (*He pulls her up from the chair and kisses her, then starts left triumphantly.*) Blake triumphs again—and with his customary dispatch, suiting action to the word—

[The telephone on small table at right rings.]

TONY (*turning*): Answer that, will you? I've got to get going!

KAY: Okay.

[The telephone rings again as Kay goes to it and picks up the receiver.]

KAY: Hello? Oh, yes . . . just a minute . . . It's Cavalli. Do you want to talk to him, Tony?

TONY: Do I—and how! (*He rushes across the room and takes the 'phone from her.*) Give me that 'phone! . . . Hello, Cavalli—I've just figured out how to bump off Scarface! Yes, that's the last one. That makes seven murders altogether. Why, there's hardly a man left alive at the end of the book! It'll sell even better than "Johnnie McGraw's Murder!" . . .

When can you have it? Now, listen, Cavalli, you've published my last eight books, and I've never let you down. The manuscript will be in your office at five o'clock. All right, see you later!

[Tony hangs up the receiver and starts left again. Then he stops suddenly and looks at Kay.]

TONY: Five o'clock? Did I say I'd be there by five o'clock?

KAY (*sweetly*): Yes, you did, dear.

TONY: Good heavens! . . . Tell Crocker not to let anyone disturb me for the rest of the afternoon!

KAY: Oh, that reminds me—you talked so much I forgot to ask. Why didn't you want Crocker to hear when we were talking about the—uh—the late Mr. Scarface?

TONY: Because, my dear, I discovered yesterday that in his spare time, Crocker is trying to write mystery stories, and I'd just as soon he didn't borrow any of my plots!

CURTAIN



TERRIBLE NIGHT

BY NANCY SMITH

CHARACTERS

ELLEN, the elder sister

DANA, 13 years old

MARIAN, her sister, aged 12

MRS. CORBETT, their mother

Place: A summer cottage in a small village.

Time: The present; summer evening.

COSTUMES

The costumes are all modern.

PROPERTIES

The properties are: furniture to make up a living room. Flowers. Sofa. Armchair. Magazines. Book and portable radio. Pillows.

LIGHTING

Evening lighting is required. A few lit lamps scattered about will indicate that.

SETTING

The living room of the Corbett's summer home. Downstage left, door leading to outside. Window, right of door. Right center, fireplace banked with flowers. Sofa upstage of fireplace, armchair, downstage of fireplace. There is a wicker table in center of room and several wicker chairs about. On a table upstage center is a portable radio and a telephone.

Cheerful chintz curtains are at window and sofa has a chintz

cover. There are gaily-colored pillows and field flowers in profusion about the room.

Door downstage right leads to pantry and kitchen and other rooms.

THE PLAY

As the curtain opens, Ellen, a pretty girl of sixteen, is preparing to go on a date. She is nicely dressed in summer frock and wide hat. Dana is lying on the sofa reading a picture magazine and Marian is standing before Ellen.

MARIAN: Ellen, I don't see why you want to go to the movies with that drip.

ELLEN: Why, Marian?

DANA: Marian's right.

ELLEN: Little Dana's jealous.

DANA: I am not.

ELLEN: It can't be that you children are afraid to stay here alone with mother and me gone for the evening?

MARIAN (*indignantly*): Children!

DANA (*the same*): Afraid!

MARIAN: We just don't like to see you throw yourself away on. . . .

[*Auto horn honks outside.*]

MARIAN: There's Bill now. (*Goes to door, then pauses.*) Of course, if you're afraid, we could have our date here.

[*Auto horn again.*]

MARIAN: Better not keep him waiting. He might take someone else.

ELLEN (*smugly*): I don't think so.

DANA: Have a nice time.

ELLEN: Well . . . (*Hesitates, then opens door.*) If you're not afraid. . . .

DANA: Good night.

ELLEN: Good night. (*She smiles.*) Babies. (*She goes.*)

MARIAN: Close that door, Dana. I'm cold.

DANA (*reluctantly closing door*): They might have at least taken us into town and dropped us off at a movie or something.

MARIAN: They want to be al-o-o-one.

DANA: That's no way to talk about your sister. It's not loyal.

MARIAN: Some sister. Is she loyal to us?

DANA: Where's Mother?

MARIAN: In the kitchen. She's fixing up some food. Mrs. Swenson 'phoned. Her little boy is sick and you know Mother. She's taking over some chicken soup and jelly. (*Goes to sofa and sits beside Dana.*)

DANA: Mother's not going to leave us all alone here?

MARIAN: She said we could come along.

DANA: What? And sit in the Swensons' smoking kitchen while mother and Mrs. Swenson talk about how to make hens lay more eggs? No thank you.

MARIAN: Still, I don't like to stay here alone. I'm not afraid exactly. But there's that tiger that escaped from the circus yesterday. He might be around.

DANA: Don't be silly. (*Gets up and walks around restlessly.*)

MARIAN: I wish it was a week-end. Then Daddy would be home.

DANA: I wish we had a car of our own.

MARIAN: So do I. Then we wouldn't have to wait for Ellen's stingy boy friend to take us around.

DANA: Or wait for the week-end for Daddy.

MARIAN: That Blake boy would sell us his old jalopy for fifty dollars.

DANA: You know what?

MARIAN: What?

DANA: Daddy said if we'd pay half, he'd give us the other half.

MARIAN: I know. But he just said that because he knows we could never get twenty-five dollars.

DANA: Besides, Mother would never let us drive a car. She says we're too young.

MARIAN: Oh well, it was a good idea while it lasted.

MRS. CORBETT (*off*): Has Ellen gone, Children?

DANA: Uh-huh.

MRS. CORBETT (*shouting from off*): What? I didn't hear you.

DANA (*shouting*): Yes.

MRS. CORBETT (*entering from kitchen with a basket*): Don't shout, Dana. I can hear you.

DANA (*mumbling*): Sorry. (*Punches a cushion.*)

MARIAN: Do you think you ought to go out, Mother? There's a loose tiger in the neighborhood.

MRS. CORBETT: They've probably caught him long ago. (*Going to door.*) Now children, I have to take these things over to Mrs. Swenson. I won't be long so behave now.

MARIAN: Are you sure you'll be all right?

MRS. CORBETT: Of course. (*Laughs.*) Well, goodbye, children.
(*She goes.*)

DANA: Children! That was meant for you. I'm in my teens now.

MARIAN: I'll be thirteen too, (*pause*) next year.

DANA (*chanting*): Marian's a child. Marian's a child.

MARIAN: Oh, shut up and bring me the candy. It's over on the table.

DANA (*hastily throwing herself into a chair*): Why did you have to wait until I was all settled?

MARIAN: You're the meanest sister I've got. (*She makes no attempt to get the candy for herself.*)

DANA: I hope Mother doesn't take the short cut across the fields.

MARIAN: Dana is a baby. Dana is a baby. Worried about an old tiger. (*Gets up and switches on the radio.*)

DANA: So what! I'm afraid of a tiger. I'm not ashamed to admit it. (*As Marian fusses with the dials.*) Get Kay Kyser. I think his music is just out of this world.

WOMAN'S VOICE (*on radio*): Darling, if you go, I'll go with you. It may mean death. But I'd rather die all at once than slowly in little pieces.

MARIAN: Oh, mur-der!

MAN'S VOICE (*on radio*): We interrupt this broadcast to bring you a special bulletin. The tiger which escaped from the Mole Brothers' Circus has not yet been captured. He is believed to be in the vicinity of Shelton. The owners have offered a reward of fifty dollars to anyone informing them of his whereabouts. Keep tuned to this station for further information.

MARIAN (*snapping off radio*): Shelton! Why, that's *here!*

DANA: I heard what he said. I hope that old tiger don't come around here.

MARIAN: I hope Mother gets to the Swensons' all right.

DANA: Call up and ask if she got there.

MARIAN: They haven't a 'phone.

DANA: Could we call up anybody else?

MARIAN: Why?

DANA: Oh—er—just to be sociable.

MARIAN: Dana. . . .

DANA: Huh?

MARIAN: Did . . . did you hear something outside?

DANA: Hear what?

MARIAN: Something's coming towards the house.

[They listen. Footsteps are heard.]

DANA: I'll . . . I'll . . . get you the candy, Marian. I'm sorry I was so mean. (Gets candy.)

MARIAN: Er . . . er . . . why don't you sit here on the sofa with me?

DANA: Why?

MARIAN: Then we could eat the candy without passing it back and forth. (Puts box down beside her.)

DANA: All right. (Sits. The footsteps come closer. Dana picks up box, puts it on her lap and sits close to Marian.)

MARIAN: Did . . . did you hear that?

DANA: I don't hear anything.

MARIAN: That's it. They've stopped. They . . . it . . . is coming in here.

DANA: Oh, Marian! (The girls throw their arms around each other and sit close.)

[The door opens slowly and cautiously. Mrs. Corbett comes in.]

MRS. CORBETT: Hello, Girls. I came in quietly so that I wouldn't frighten you.

DANA: I . . . I . . . wasn't scared. (Edges away from Marian.)

MARIAN: Me . . . me . . . either. (Edges away from Dana.)

MRS. CORBETT: I just came back for my umbrella. It's beginning to rain.

DANA: It's in the kitchen. I'll get it for you. (Runs out to kitchen.)

MARIAN (edging over to her mother): Mother, please don't go over to the Swensons'. I'm scared.

MRS. CORBETT: What? A big girl like you?

MARIAN: Not scared for myself. For you. I'm scared you'll meet that tiger.

MRS. CORBETT: Oh, nonsense.

MARIAN: But it's in this neighborhood. That's what the radio said. (Dana comes in with the umbrella.) Isn't it, Dana?

DANA: No, it isn't raining very hard. You won't need your overshoes, Mother. What do you think, Marian?

MARIAN: I think she ought to change her clothes. It would be a shame to get that nice dress wet. (Pulling Mrs. Corbett towards kitchen.) Come on, Mother.

MRS. CORBETT: Dear, dear. Such thoughtfulness. Now I'm not going far and I'll be back soon. (At door.) Goodbye, girls. (She goes.)

MARIAN (*calling after her*): Hurry back.

DANA: Sit down, Marian. You look sort of funny.

MARIAN (*as she sits on edge of sofa, nervously*): Do I? It must be the heat.

DANA: What would you do if a burglar came along? When we're alone like this, I mean?

MARIAN (*laughing feebly*): Let's decide on either a tiger or a burglar. Of course, neither one would come right in here. (*Glances nervously over her shoulder*.)

DANA: No-o-o. (*Looks around nervously*.)

MARIAN: You er . . . didn't think you saw anything did you?

DANA: No. Er . . . did you?

MARIAN: Don't be silly.

DANA: I don't know what makes you so nervous. (*Twisting her handkerchief nervously*.) I'm not.

MARIAN: I thought I heard something, that's all.

DANA: It's your imagination.

MARIAN (*unconvinced*): I guess that's what it is. My English teacher said I had too much imagination.

DANA: Look, we've got the whole evening free. Let's do something—play a game or something.

MARIAN: All right. What?

DANA: Let's read ghost stories out loud and see who can stay brave the longest.

MARIAN (*jumping up*): Let's read a good murder mystery. I got a honey of a one out of the lending library. "The Corpse With the Floating Foot."

DANA: Swell!

MARIAN (*hunting among magazines on table*): It was here. Oh, I know! I left it up in my room. (*Turns and looks at Dana*.)

DANA (*cringing*): Well?

MARIAN: Run up and get it for me.

DANA: It's cold up there.

MARIAN: I'll lend you my sweater.

DANA: Since when are you getting so generous? You wouldn't let me wear it yesterday. You go up and get it. You know right where it is.

MARIAN: It's too dark . . . I mean, I don't feel like reading.

DANA: Scared?

MARIAN: Of course not. Anyhow, I think I took the book back.

DANA: I got a better book. "True Ghost Stories." (*Fishes under sofa cushion*.) I keep it here where no one will find it.

MARIAN: You're selfish.

DANA: Anyhow you don't feel like reading.

MARIAN: Let's see it. (*Takes book and leafs through pages.*) "The Ghost in the Pantry."

DANA: No.

MARIAN: "Death Comes on Shoeless Feet." That sounds good.

DANA: Sounds terrible. Read "The Murdering Ghost."

MARIAN (*turns pages, finds story and reads*): "Twelve good men and true sat along one wall of a dimly lighted room. They were the coroner's jury. Beside a plain marble slab on which lay the grisly bloody remains of a murdered man, sat the coroner himself. He was a thin, hawk-like man with a skin like yellow parchment. There was an aura. . . ." What does that mean?

DANA: Atmosphere.

MARIAN: "Of evil around him. Outside the rain streamed down in sheets. The only other sound was the thin tapping of the coroner's long claw-like nails on the marble slab."

DANA (*yawning*): Oh-hum.

MARIAN: "Suddenly, the thirteen men in the room felt a cold damp breath. There was something else in the room, something they couldn't see." (*Marian looks around the room furtively.*) "They forgot the murdered man. Faintly, faintly, came a sound . . . a pitiful wail that ended in snarling hate. The wail. . . ." (*From direction of kitchen comes this identical sound. Marian stops reading. Both girls listen. Wail comes again.*)

DANA (*laughing uncertainly*): Heh-heh.

MARIAN (*the same*): Heh-heh-heh.

DANA: Afraid?

MARIAN: Nope.

[*Wail goes into snarl. Both girls jump up and scramble under the sofa. After awhile they stick their heads out.*]

DANA: The teacher said you had too much imagination. You *imagine* you heard a sound, don't you?

MARIAN: Yes. And I imagined that it sounded just like a tiger.

DANA: The door's not locked.

MARIAN: Lock it!

DANA: Lock it yourself. I may be scared but I'm not crazy.

MARIAN: We'll lock it together. (*They crawl out and, hand in hand, go to door leading outside and lock it.*) I feel safer now.

DANA: It couldn't be the tiger.

MARIAN: Course not.

DANA: We don't need the door locked.

MARIAN: Well, it's locked now. Why waste time opening it again?

DANA: I guess we're silly locking the door because we *thought* we heard a noise.

MARIAN (*uneasily*): Yes. (*They laugh.*)

DANA: Have some candy. (*They eat candy. Marian picks up book again.*) Oh, don't read anymore. (*Hastily.*) That's a punk story.

MARIAN (*closing book quickly*): I really don't care for mysteries. Let's play checkers.

DANA: No. You always cheat.

MARIAN: I do not.

DANA: Let's have a style show.

MARIAN: Yeah. You dress up and I be the audience. No thank you. Let's play truth and consequence.

DANA: I hate that baby game. But to satisfy you. . . .

MARIAN: You do so like to play it. I'll start. Who was that boy I saw you with yesterday?

DANA: I can answer any way I please.

MARIAN: Just so you tell the truth.

DANA: My answer is, "Which boy?" There. I answered it and it's the truth and now it's my turn.

MARIAN: You dodged the question and now you have to take the consequence. Go out to the barn by yourself and come back.

DANA: I will not.

MARIAN: I dare you to.

DANA: I dare you.

MARIAN: You're afraid.

DANA: I'm not. Let's see you go out there.

MARIAN: I dared you first. Dana is a fraidy cat. Dana is a fraidy cat.

DANA: I'm not. I'll show you I'm not. Lend me your flashlight. Mine's busted.

MARIAN: You don't need a flashlight.

DANA: Stingy. I'm not going out without a light.

MARIAN: Fraidy cat! Fraidy cat!

DANA (*furiously*): I'll show you. (*Rushes out kitchen door. Marian eats candy, looks over magazines on table. The wail comes again, ending in a snarl.*)

MARIAN (*scared*): Dana? (*Sound of key clicking in kitchen*

door. She screams.) Dana, wait for me. I'll go with you. Wait! Wait! Come back! (Tries to open kitchen door. Finds it locked.) Oh, gosh! (Rushes to door leading outside. Unlocks it, throws it open. Dana is standing there. Marian screams. Dana walks in calmly.) Dana! Are you all right? I'm sorry I was mean. Let's play style show. You can dress up. I'll be the audience.

DANA: Oh, please stop chattering. I've got other things to do besides entertaining you. (Goes to 'phone.)

MARIAN: Why Dana, what's the matter?

DANA (into 'phone): Give me the sheriff's office please. No. I don't know the number.

MARIAN (huddling close to her): Did you see a burglar?

DANA: I did not. (Into 'phone.) I wish to report that we have the escaped tiger here. Yes. The Corbett cottage on the Shelton Road. That's right. And bring the reward money. (Listens.) Impossible! I have him locked up right in my kitchen. Yes. Goodbye. (Hangs up.)

MARIAN: Dana, you didn't. . . .

DANA (tossing her head): Yes, I did. When I went out into the kitchen, I saw him there sitting under the sink.

MARIAN: Who? What?

DANA: I told you. The tiger. It was dark but he was bright yellow with stripes and his green eyes were glaring at me.

MARIAN: O-o-o-o-h.

DANA: First I locked that door. (Points to kitchen door.) Then I heard him snarl. Just as he was getting ready to jump at me, I ran out of the back door and locked that. Then I ran around the house and came in here.

MARIAN (solemnly): I'll never call you a fraidy cat again.

DANA (airily): It was nothing. (Suddenly excited.) Marian, you know what we got locked up in the kitchen?

MARIAN: The tiger?

DANA: The jalopy. No less than a fifty dollar car.

MARIAN: Dana, you're wonderful!

DANA: Wasn't it silly to be scared? I wasn't scared a bit of that tiger.

MARIAN: Nothing could ever scare me again.

DANA: Me either.

[Door leading outside opens slowly. Both girls scream piercingly and cling to each other. Mrs. Corbett walks in.

MRS. CORBETT: Well, well, two loving sisters. Now that's what I like to see. (*Girls draw apart guiltily.*)

DANA: Mother. . . .

MARIAN: Mother, we captured. . . .

DANA: I captured it. Let me tell.

MRS. CORBETT: What are you talking about?

MARIAN: The tiger!

DANA: I caught it!

MRS. CORBETT: What?

DANA: I've got it locked up in the kitchen.

MARIAN: Mother, say we can have the car. Please!

MRS. CORBETT: You . . . you . . . (*Sits down and begins to laugh.*)

DANA: What's the matter?

MRS. CORBETT (*controlling her laughter*): Oh, I'm sorry. You poor dears. That isn't a tiger.

DANA: It is so.

MRS. CORBETT: No. The tiger never escaped. It was hiding under the cage. The news came over the radio while I was at the Swensons'.

DANA (*piteously*): You're sure?

MRS. CORBETT: Yes dear.

DANA: But Mother, there is a tiger locked up in the kitchen. I saw him . . . all yellow and big green eyes and he snarled at me.

MRS. CORBETT: Oh! I know. It's little Gus's dog.

BOTH: Dog?

MRS. CORBETT: Yes, he ran away two days ago. A big yellow hound with dark markings.

DANA (*throwing herself on sofa*): Oh, oh!

MRS. CORBETT: That's why little Gus was sick, grieving over his lost pet. The Swensons' will be very grateful now. Poor Gus. (*Goes to kitchen door.*)

MARIAN: It's locked. You have to go around the other way.

[*Mrs. Corbett goes to other door.*]

DANA: Want us to go with you?

MRS. CORBETT: Certainly not. A dog? (*She laughs and goes.*)

MARIAN (*deflated*): There goes our car. (*Hopefully.*) Maybe Mother's wrong. It may be the tiger after all.

DANA: No. I remember now. The sheriff did say the tiger wasn't lost after all. But I didn't believe him.

MARIAN: He could be mistaken.

[From kitchen comes the sound of joyful barking.]

DANA: That doesn't sound like a jalopy.

MARIAN: Nor a tiger, either. (*Door lock clicks, door opens and Mrs. Corbett enters.*)

MRS. CORBETT: Yes. It's Bosca, the Swenson dog. Poor thing, he was starved. That's why he came into the kitchen.

MARIAN: Now we'll never, never, never get a car. And all summer long, we won't be able to go anyplace. (*Throws herself on sofa and starts to cry.*)

MRS. CORBETT: Don't cry, dear. I hadn't meant to tell you. It was supposed to be a surprise.

DANA (*clapping her hands*): Oh, then you're going to buy us the car!

MRS. CORBETT: No dear, but Daddy and I have bought you each a nice new bicycle.

MARIAN (*disappointed*): Oh, Mother!

MRS. CORBETT: English bicycles. They'll come this week-end.

DANA (*with a show of interest*): English bicycles? Three speeds?

MRS. CORBETT: Yes, dear. You see with the tire shortage and gasoline rationing, a car might not be very serviceable. In fact, Daddy and I may get bicycles, too.

MARIAN (*excited*): Mother, let's get a horse and buggy. Let's.

MRS. CORBETT (*smiling*): We may.

DANA: I always did want one of those English bikes.

MARIAN: Me, too. Thank you, Mother. (*She kisses her mother.*)

DANA: Just think! We'll be the only kids at school with those new kind of bikes. You're swell, Mother. Daddy too. (*Kisses her.*)

MRS. CORBETT: I thought you'd be pleased. Now! I think I'll take the dog over to the Swensons'. Little Gus will be so happy. (*Starts for kitchen door.*)

DANA: Wait! I'll go with you, Mother.

MARIAN: Me too.

MRS. CORBETT: Surely you're not afraid to stay alone?

DANA: Course not. Only we don't want you out alone.

MARIAN: Yeah. We better go along. Something might happen to you.

MRS. CORBETT: That's very thoughtful of you. Come on, then.

(She puts an arm around each girl and the three of them go out through the kitchen door as . . .

CURTAIN

NOTES

The fire in the first scene is imitated by putting a red bulb under a heap of small pieces of wood. If the play is given out of doors, you can have a regular fire.

The booming of the sea and the screaming wind can be created through records. Beating a muffled drum at intervals will sound like the booming of the sound.

The Shadow, who is an important character in the play, will give the stage director an opportunity for unusual effects. It is very easy to create his personality.

Have your back drop as light a grey as possible. Be sure to have it stretched very tight, without any folds or pleats in it. Place a 500-Watt bulb floodlight quite a distance upstage. The bulb should not be frosted and there should be no diffuser. The actor who is to play the Shadow should stand between the light and the drop; the closer he will stand to the light the bigger a shadow he will throw; the nearer to the drop the smaller he will seem.

The horns should be cut out of cardboard and attached to his head.

SETTING and THE PLAY

A wild spot in Screecham Island in Massachusetts. It contains nothing but rocks and stunted trees. Since the play must have a tightly stretched light grey background, the rocks and shrubs should be painted on screens, or on cardboard or drawing paper which is to be tacked on wooden frames. Either screens or frames are to be set in back of the stage.

The sky is covered with flying black clouds and there is a wild gale blowing. It continues to blow fiercely throughout the whole scene. From the distance can be heard the continuous booming of the sea in wild rhythm as if in tune with the action to come.

The scene is only lighted by a fitful sharp blue moonlight showing through the racing black clouds, and the uneven fire burning towards the front of the stage amidst stunted trees and rocks.

Around the little fire are four people. A big burly man, Captain William Kidd. He is dressed in a velvet coat, breeches,

big boots with flaring tops, and a sash from which a pair of pistols can be seen. On his head he wears a cocked hat. Near him sits a young boy, no more than 15, Charles, the cabin boy for whom the Captain has a great liking because he resembles his own son whom he has left in New York. Charles is dressed in breeches, boots, a short jacket, and wears no hat. Not far to the left sit two women. They are both thin and haggard. The light shines fully on them and you can see that their faces are wrinkled, sharp, and restless. Both are dressed more or less alike: full skirts and shawls that cover their heads and half of their bodies. Their clothes are grey and dark. These are the two sisters, Hannah and Sarah Screecham who are now inhabitants of the Island.

More forbidding and frightening than the Screecham sisters is a Shadow which seems to flit now and then amongst them and through the trees. He is dressed like a sailor with a cocked hat from which two horns stick out. At moments, when you see him from the back, it seems as if he has a tail.

As a matter of fact you can dress the Shadow in any fantastic costume you can procure. You could use a traditional Mephistopheles costume and make up or just drape some sheets around the actor. Sometimes he appears gigantic as if threatening to crush them; sometimes he becomes dwarfed and terrible in his grotesque deformity.

The four are fully aware of the Shadow. All but the young boy don't seem to mind or notice him most of the time. Only when he rears himself, gigantic and grotesque, Captain Kidd expresses in his face a dare-devil defiance, while the two women show anger and impatience. The boy, however, winces and shrinks when he comes near him.

At the opening of the curtain, Captain Kidd is walking up and down, the two men are sitting on the ground upright and defiant while the boy, Charles, is sitting all hunched up.

SCENE ONE

CAPT. KIDD: Take courage, boy, no harm can come to ye. Don't be afraid.

CHARLES: Yes sir . . . But . . . The Shadow . . . He's always with us . . . from the moment we set foot on the Island . . . It ain't natural . . . It . . .

CAPT. KIDD: Don't ye fear him, boy. I'll beat him at his own

little game. He wants me to take the treasure to his two friends Lord Bellamont and Bob Livingston. They both are the same color as he. (*Pointing with his thumb backwards to the Shadow.*) He owes them tons and tons of gold, for they sold themselves to him. But I won't bring it to 'em. I owe none of these three anything. He is watching out for their interest, and I'm looking out for mine. He can't touch me while I'm alive. No sir-ee. Not me.

SARAH (*laughing screechingly*): And we don't either. You're a smart one, Captain.

CAPT. KIDD: I'll bury that chest so that Lord Bellamont and shrewd Bob Livingston who are no whit better than him'll never find it. (*Pointing to the Shadow, who now seems to be holding his sides with laughter.*) I'll hide that treasure so they'll never get it and when I come back we'll take it out again. It'll be mine. Mine.

[The Shadow is still shaking with laughter as if he thinks this a grand joke. Now and then the shrieking wind brings with it the sound of the words: "Never, never."

SARAH: That's the way to deal with him.

CAPT. KIDD (*mocking*): Ha! high Lord of Pitch and Brimstone, ye think ye're master of everything—but not of us. Not of me.

HANNAH (*with contempt*): I'm not afraid of him.

SARAH: D'ye hear that, Captain Kidd? We are not afraid of him though we live here all alone on the Island.

CAPT. KIDD: Nor am I, though I buried my Bible in the sandy shore of Madagascar. For that he promised he'd never touch me while I'm alive. And I am alive, full well, I tell ye.

[The Shadow rises in gigantic form and spreads out his arms wildly as if to crush the defiant Captain. Through the wind there can be heard mocking laughter and the words: "Just wait, just wait. . . ."]

HANNAH: Look at him, Captain Kidd, he's after you.

CAPT. KIDD: So ye're after me, sirrah! Hangman! Black Cloven-Foot! I'm not afeared of ye. Ye can't touch me. I defy ye. I'm hiding my treasure so that your friends'll never get it. Only I'll get it. Only I, d'ye hear! I've beaten ye before, and I'll beat ye again.

[The Shadow just keeps on with his laughing which can be heard in the whistling wind, and shouting: "Never . . . just wait . . . Never. . . ."]

CHARLES: Captain! Captain, let's go.

HANNAH: How soon'll those fellows with the chest be here? The night is passing.'

CAPT. KIDD: They'll be here soon. They just have to come up from the beachhead. The chest is heavy and the ground is uneven and full of rocks and brush and trees.

CHARLES: Must I wait . . . Look. . . .

[*The Shadow again stretches out his hands as if to strangle Captain Kidd.*

CAPT. KIDD: Aye, we must wait for 'em and don't ye be afraid. Don't be scared of that evil monkey's dance. That's all he can do. He can't touch me! That's the agreement I made with him when I buried the Bible in the sand. I beat him at his own bargaining. After that he swore he'd never do any harm to me while I'm alive. Little care I for his dancing in the air.

THE SHADOW (*and the wind*): While you're alive . . . Soon you won't be . . . soon you won't be. . . .

CAPT. KIDD: Are ye trying to scare me, your Lordship of Pitch and Brimstone?

A VOICE (*from a distance*): Ship ahoy!

CAPT. KIDD: There they are. (*To the Shadow.*) And your Lordship can dangle from the highest gibbet in the Kingdom.

[*A dull thud is heard outside and there enters One-eyed Jed, Jim Peel, and Richard, a cabin boy about the same age as Charles, and Francis Gordon. All are crew members of Captain Kidd's ship.*

They are all dressed more or less alike: sea breeches, short boots, torn shirts, jackets, sashes in which are cutlasses and pistols, and kerchiefs on their heads. Jed is carrying a lantern.

JED: Sir, but that chest's heavy!

JIM: How much farther to go?

FRANCIS (*looking at Charles*): Another hand would be of help in the carrying, sir.

CAPT. KIDD: Charles, you go and help the men.

CHARLES: Very well, sir.

CAPT. KIDD: Mistress Hannah'll show ye the way. The place is dug out, stoned, and all ready. It's but a short distance.

HANNAH: Yes, we got the place all ready.

SARAH: We are ever ready to oblige gentlemen of the sea.

CAPT. KIDD: Aye, these two ladies are most helpful.

SARAH: It's a nice, deep, wide bed—like a grave, he-he-he.

[*The wind howls. The Shadow seems to find the words funny and you can see him hold his sides with laughter.*

CHARLES: Lord above!

CAPT. KIDD: What's amiss, boy!

CHARLES (*whispering*): The Shadow . . . sir. . . .

CAPT. KIDD (*trying to distract the attention of the others*):
Hurry men. Hurry.

RICHARD: I . . . I . . . I'm scared, sir. Must I go along?

CAPT. KIDD: All of ye must help! Don't be a prattling fool, boy.
We must get back to the sloop and start for Boston. Governor Bellamont is waiting for us.

FRANCIS: Aye, Captain, but it's a heavy chest and I don't feel so strong. I've got a pain right here. (*Pointing to his heart*.)

CAPT. KIDD: Let Charles go along. That'll make it a little easier.

HANNAH: Come, men, and stop cackling like magpies. Keep your breath for the work.

CAPT. KIDD: Follow Mistress Hannah, she'll show ye the pit which she and her sister were good enough to prepare. She'll keep a watch on the place until we return. And remember there's a good extra share for each one of ye.

JED: Dame, we are ready. Come, Jim and Francis and you boys.
Don't forget the extra share, Captain.

CAPT. KIDD: I've always kept my word with ye men and ye can count on it now.

[*Hannah goes, followed out by Jed and the others behind him. Only Captain Kidd and Sarah remain.*]

SARAH: Can you trust 'em?

CAPT. KIDD: They've all been with me from the day I owned my ship except Richard Gordon. The sailors say he sold himself to Beelzebub. I picked him up in Madagascar. But Jed vouches for him so I guess he's safe.

[*The wind brings the sound of mocking laughter and in between, words can be heard distinctly.*]

THE SHADOW: Safe . . . safe for sure. Safe as the bottom of a grave or a fine high gibbet . . . Safe you'll be soon, William Kidd. . . .

CAPT. KIDD (*angry for a moment*): Hark, ye mangy, ill-begotten cur. If ye come here now in flesh and blood I'd hang ye high, high on one of these trees where ye'd serve for a sun dried scarecrow, to frighten the sea gulls away.

SARAH: Go at him, Captain Kidd. Go at him. Tell 'im you can plunder ships and send 'em down deep and if he doesn't like it you'll thumb your nose at him. He-he-he, thumbing your nose at the Earl of Pitch and Brimstone. That's fine indeed. And I'll thumb my nose at his Earlship too. He-he-he.

[*The wind and even the Shadow join her screeching laughter.*

CAPT. KIDD: And I've got my treasure safe tucked away. Sink me sixty fathoms deep if anyone but me gets it. Hey, Earl!

SHADOW (*in singsong voice*): Ill-gotten gold is ill-kept gold. You won't have it. . . . None will have it, only I. They'll come for it. It's my bait. They'll come for ill-gotten gold . . . but only I keep ill-gotten gold . . . There's blood on it . . . the blood of avarice . . . that makes it mine . . . I'll keep it. . . .

CAPT. KIDD: No ye won't, you Earl of Rats. I'm coming back and get my gold and laugh at ye.

SHADOW (*holding his side with laughter*): Coming back . . . to get your gold . . . you robbed . . . it's mine . . . coming back . . . it's mine . . . ho-ho-ho.

[*He suddenly disappears and the laughter dies off in the distance. An instant later there are heard a few terrible, blood-curdling yells and screams. Captain Kidd and Sarah are frozen with fear for a moment.*

CAPT. KIDD: What was that?

SARAH: I wonder.

[*Both stand silent, listening. There is a sound of crashing as if someone were running through the bushes. Richard comes rushing in.*

RICHARD: He fell in dead . . . Francis . . . sudden . . . It's the fiends, sir . . . I won't stay . . . I'm going to the boat.

[*He rushes out. Steps are heard. Jed, Jim Peel, and Charles enter.*

JED: Sir, there was an accident.

CAPT. KIDD: Speak up, man. What's happened? Ye look as if ye were afeared of your own shadow.

JIM: Francis Gordon, gone, sir.

CHARLES: He fell over . . . in.

CAPT. KIDD: How?

JED: We were lowering the chest and had it set, when all of a sudden he screamed: My heart! It hurts! And the next thing he keels over, right into the hole, dragging stones and earth with him.

CHARLES: It near covered him.

JED: I jumped right down after him but he was stone dead.

JIM: Stone dead, sir. His heart had stopped beating, sir. 'Twas as if someone had pushed him in an' taken his heart out.

CAPT. KIDD: Where is Mistress Hannah?

CHARLES: She stayed there.

CAPT. KIDD: For shame, men, leaving a woman all alone.

SARAH: Don't fear for my sister. She can well take care of herself.

CHARLES: I saw Richard running and I didn't think of Mistress Hannah. I just ran. If you want me to go back, sir. . . .

[During the last few words Hannah Screecham has come in and has overheard Charles speaking.]

HANNAH: You don't have to go. I stayed behind to bury the dead. It is a good omen for the buried treasure, Captain. The dead man's ghost will watch it from now on. The man must have died of some sudden ailment.

SARAH: Not much lost, Captain, is it? He's the right kind to watch the buried treasure.

[The Shadow has appeared again. Only the Screecham sisters, the Captain, and Charles notice him.]

SARAH: We can go now, Captain. If you want us, you know where to find us.

HANNAH: Good night, Captain.

SARAH: You'll always find us here when you come back. Always.

THE SHADOW (*it sounds almost like the wind*): When you come back. Ho-ho-ho. When you come back. . . .

JED: Captain, let's go, those are queer sounds. The place is haunted.

CAPT. KIDD (*trying to distract attention from the voice*): Good night, Mistress Hannah, Mistress Sarah. I'll be soon back.

[Hannah and Sarah Screecham go out.]

SHADOW: Back . . . Back. . . .

JIM: Sir, I'm going back to the boat.

CAPT. KIDD: Very well.

JED: I'm going along.

CHARLES: And I? . . .

CAPT. KIDD: You stay, Charles, I've got one more little thing to do and I need ye. I'll be there in a few minutes Jed, Jim.

[The men go out.]

CAPT. KIDD: Charles, ye know I've always favored ye. You are the image of my son. He's with his mother in New York.

CHARLES: Yes, sir.

CAPT. KIDD: Don't be afeared of that Shadow. He can't do any harm to those who are good and innocent.

CHARLES: Yes, sir.

[The Shadow moves restlessly and Charles shrinks away.]

CAPT. KIDD: Don't fear him, Charles, I tell ye. Just keep on the straight course. And he can't do any harm to me either . . . while I'm alive. I'm going to get that chest full of gold or no one else'll get it, least of all Governor Bellamont and Robert Livingston who have sold themselves to him and who are plotting against me.

CHARLES: Yes, sir.

CAPT. KIDD: They declared me a pirate and I'm now going to them and ask 'em to declare me an honest Captain.

[The Shadow suddenly holds his sides in laughter. There is an echo of "an honest Captain." Charles shows fear again.]

CAPT. KIDD: I tell ye boy, ye needn't be afeared of him. He's yellow and ye can out-smart him easily. Now, Charles, there's just one more thing, and that's important. Should anything happen to me, Charles, I've a trust for ye.

CHARLES: Yes, sir.

CAPT. KIDD: Charles, I'm entrusting ye with the drawing showing ye exactly where the chest was buried. Ye know, it's easy to forget a small square spot even with markings. I got it from Sarah Screecham.

[He draws a yellowish roll of parchment out of his bosom pocket and gives it to Charles who takes it.]

CAPT. KIDD: Should anything happen to me. . . .

CHARLES: Oh sir! You mustn't say that.

CAPT. KIDD: Ye never can tell. Ye never can tell. Should something happen to me, ye must give half of the treasure to my wife and children and the rest is your share.

CHARLES: I hope nothing does happen, sir.

CAPT. KIDD: So do I. In that case the map'll be of no value to ye. Meanwhile, guard it like the apple of your eye. Never tell to anyone the name of the island. The markings alone'll never be enough to lead 'em here.

CHARLES: I'll guard it, sir, I swear I'll never speak and never show it to a soul. But I hope nothing . . . happens . . . to you and I can give it back to you, sir. Now let's get back to the boat, please, sir. That Shadow. . . .

CAPT. KIDD: Ye are right boy. Let's go. As for ye, (turning to the Shadow) I've got ye beaten and ye can do no harm to me now.

SHADOW (*laughing*): No harm. Ho-ho-ho. No harm! Just wait! *[The two go out and the curtain closes.]*

SCENE Two

The same spot where Captain Kidd met the Screecham sisters two years before. Again it is a wild dark night and the wind is howling amongst the trees. For a time the stage is silent. Suddenly the Shadow appears flitting from tree to tree. This goes on for a few seconds. The Shadow seems to be dancing in sheer pleasure.

SHADOW: They are coming . . . They're always coming . . . Blind fools greedy for gold. They're after Captain Kidd's gold. Bright Captain Kidd! Courageous Captain Kidd! . . . He thought he could get the best of me. He dangled high, high, high, on the gibbet . . . Ho-ho-ho . . . he was coming back for the treasure . . . But my good friends Bellamont and Livingston got him and had him hung high . . . high . . . Now the new ones are coming for the treasure. They think they can get the best of me, ho-ho-ho . . . And after them will be others . . . Ho-ho-ho . . . here. . . .

[Four men enter. First comes One-eyed Jed; following him are Jim Peel, Frank Makard and Bill Blair. They are all carrying shovels and axes. When the four enter the Shadow merges into the darkness. Frank Makard is a little fellow and speaks in a slightly nasal tone. Bill Blair is scrawny and lanky. All are dressed as sailors.

JED: It's here we met the Screecham sisters. They're a pair for you.

JIM: I wonder if they're still living here.

JED: I don't know. Think I've heard it said that they both went where they'd meet their kind. But I'm not sure.

FRANK: We're wasting words and time. How far are we from the spot where you buried the chest?

BILL: Aye, that's right, how far?

JED: Not more'n 300 ship lengths, I'd say.

FRANK: You're sure the map I got from Charlie tells the exact location.

BILL: I'm sure of that. Charles was much favored by the Captain, may the Lord rest his soul. And even if ye hadn't gotten the map, Frank Makard, I'd find the spot. Didn't I and Jim and Francis bring it there with our own hands and . . . Poor Francis. I can see him this minute, poor soul.

JIM: Don't speak of that, mate.

FRANK: Aye, don't let's speak of that. Ye can say what ye want but it's not likely we'd find the burying place without the map. Why, Charles was going for it himself, with Richard. They said they wanted to give the money to the widow of the Captain. If I hadn't got the map away from 'em, they'd be here instead of us.

BILL: I guess it was a bright idea to get the map away from 'em.

FRANK (*boasting*): I could twist these children around my fingers; I just told 'em, I'd go with 'em and that I had to study the map, first. When it was in my hands, I just made a copy . . . and here, gentlemen, (*waving the rolled paper in the air*) it is.

JED: You got it out o' them because they are young fools.

FRANK: I can get it out o' old fools, too. Just put on an honest face and a honeyed voice and you catch 'em like flies. And because I got the map I ought to get one-third o' the share.

JED: There you start all over again. I told ye that ev'n without the map I could ha' found the location.

FRANK: Then why didn't you?

JED: Jim and I couldn't carry that chest alone. It took four of us to bring it.

FRANK: Then ye've got to pay for it.

BILL: Gentlemen, no quarreling. Ye're quarreling over an unborn child. Wait until we get the treasure and. . .

[*He's interrupted by the shrieking of the wind which sounds like mocking laughter at the moment.*

BILL: I repeat, gentlemen, let's hurry. The place is eerie. Come on.

JIM: Bill's right, let's get on.

FRANK: Come.

[*The four file out one behind the other. No sooner are they out than Charles enters stealthily with Richard following.*

CHARLES: Did you hear what that thief, Frank, said?

RICHARD: Why did you trust him? You should have known better.

CHARLES: He spoke to me like a friend, as if he meant well, and you have to trust people. How could you live otherwise?

RICHARD: I don't trust any man.

CHARLES: If they get the chest and they don't give Mistress Kidd her share, and us our share, we'll go to the governor.

RICHARD: That's right, but I don't think we should let them

see us at all. Just let us make certain that they have the treasure; then we'll catch them in Boston. Here we are alone and they are four men against us two. They could even kill us.

CHARLES: They wouldn't dare. Come on, let's follow them.

RICHARD: We don't have to do that. We can just wait for 'em here. They won't be long.

[*The Shadow suddenly appears, but Richard does not see him.*

RICHARD: I hope they bring the chest with 'em. It was full of gold and jewels.

SHADOW: Ho-ho-ho . . . They won't . . . They won't . . . They won't . . .

RICHARD: Lord! what was that!

CHARLES: The Shadow! (*He points to it as it flits about in the woods.*)

RICHARD: What do you mean . . . What . . . Lord! (*He makes ready to run.*)

CHARLES: Don't you run! You ran away when we were here last. (*He holds on to him.*) I didn't. Who . . . who . . . are you?

SHADOW: I've many names but they all mean the same. . . . (*He disappears.*)

RICHARD (*his teeth chattering*): Was it real!

CHARLES: I don't know. Captain Kidd called him the Earl of Pitch and Brimstone. If only. . . .

[*He is interrupted by wild yells and after a few seconds Jed, Bill, Frank and Jim come running in wildly.*

RICHARD: What's happened?

FRANK (*furiously flinging the scroll at him*): You can keep it. Go and get it so the black fiend standing at one end and the white one at the other take you with 'em.

[*There is a howling laughter in the distance as the four men run out almost knocking each other over.*

RICHARD: Come, Charles. Let's go. I'll not stay here. There's no use staying. I told you Francis Gordon, who died when we buried the casket, is watching it. Come please.

CHARLES: Let me try, I'm not afraid. I. . . .

[*The Shadow appears dancing grotesquely as if in joy.*

RICHARD: There . . . there is a black . . . Come! Come. . . .

[*He gets hold of Charles' arm, dragging him out. Charles picks up the scroll from the ground and follows him reluctantly. For a time there is silence. Then Sarah and Hannah Screecham*

enter slowly. They walk a little more bent than they did in the first scene.

SARAH: He-he-he. Did you hear 'em? There was another party.

Lordy, they come like the rolling of the waves.

HANNAH: There's always a new party for the gold.

THE SHADOW: There will always be another party. They're all the same. Thieves after stolen gold. It's a grand game. It goes on forever.

HANNAH: We didn't ask you for any explanations.

THE SHADOW: It is true just the same. Men'll always follow me, and I'll always get the best of 'em. Ho-ho-ho.

HANNAH: He tells the truth. He always tells the truth. . . .

SARAH: If only someone would come along to prove him a liar.

SHADOW: If! Ho-ho-ho.

SARAH: Some day someone will, I tell you. Someone will.

SHADOW: I'll wait . . . I'll wait . . . Meanwhile watch the game! Watch the fun! !!

[He laughs continuously as the CURTAIN CLOSES.]



HER HIGHNESS, THE COOK

BY ESTER C. AVERILL

CHARACTERS

MRS. WARREN CARTER, *out to make an impression*

FLOSSIE, *her daughter. A diamond chip off the old block*

MAID

MARY ELIZABETH ALEXANDRIA BEATRICE LOUISE JONES, *the cook*

MRS. CLYDE ASHBY, *the social dictator of Park Avenue*

Time: The play should act about twenty-five minutes.

Place: The living room of the Carter mansion.

COSTUMES

Mrs. Warren Carter and Flossie wear expensive clothes, and plenty of conspicuous jewelry. Mrs. Ashby is perfectly groomed, having on a tailored suit, some evidently good jewelry, and conservative accessories. The maid wears a regular uniform. Mary, the cook, first appears in a simple black dress, then later changes to a uniform.

PROPERTIES

Divan, several chairs, coffee table, etc., for the living room. (What you have or what you can borrow.) Newspaper. Teacups, tray, and spoons.

LIGHTING

Lighting is just normal daylight.

SETTING and THE PLAY

The Carter living room is furnished to give an impression of recent wealth, without good taste. Necessary properties are a divan, several chairs, and a coffee table. Other properties may be added as desired.

At the rise of the curtain Mrs. Carter is discovered pacing the floor. She appears to be in great distress. Flossie enters, carrying a newspaper.

MRS. CARTER: Any news yet, Flossie?

FLOSSIE: Not a bit, Mother!

MRS. CARTER (*tragically*): What are we going to do?

FLOSSIE (*discouraged*): I don't know!

MRS. CARTER (*sits wearily on the divan*): This is terrible!

FLOSSIE: Perfectly hideous!

MRS. CARTER: I can't stand this suspense much longer!

FLOSSIE: This isn't suspense. It's flat failure!

MRS. CARTER: I never fail when I set out to do something. I snapped up a millionaire husband last year, and believe me, that was no cinch, but (*becomes discouraged*) it seems to be a much tougher proposition to get a cook!

FLOSSIE: I thought all the money you have now would get us anything we want!

MRS. CARTER: I could get an ordinary cook easily enough, but I want a perfect one!

FLOSSIE: You ought to know what it takes to make a perfect cook!

MRS. CARTER (*warningly*): You know you're never to mention the fact again that I was a cook before I landed Warren Carter!

FLOSSIE: Yes, but it's a pity when you were such a grand cook!

MRS. CARTER: I proved the saying all right, that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach! Warren Carter fell for my fancy ragouts and chocolate cakes. That's why he married me!

FLOSSIE: And now your plan is to break into Park Avenue society by way of the prominent stomachs!

MRS. CARTER: It can be done. I haven't cooked a dozen of other women into prominence without learning a thing or two!

FLOSSIE: Why not cook your own way into society then?

MRS. CARTER (*vehemently*): Never! When I stepped out of the kitchen to marry Warren Carter I washed my hands of the dishpan forever!

FLOSSIE: You had a lucky break when Step-Papa got bilious from eating your rich foods, and had to go onto a diet. Otherwise you might lose his affection without the benefit of your alluring tid-bits!

MRS. CARTER: I've got him all right, but the problem of breaking into Park Avenue has got me!

FLOSSIE (*opens the newspaper*): This advertisement of yours ought to bring results, but it hasn't!

MRS. CARTER (*sighs*): That was a work of art! Read it to me again!

FLOSSIE (*reads*): "Wanted: An expert, extra-fancy cook who knows all the tricks of the trade. None others need apply. Wages, no consideration."

MRS. CARTER: I'd have risen to that bait mighty quick once!
[*The maid enters*.]

MAID: Madam, there's a person here to see you!

MRS. CARTER: Who is it?

MAID: She says she's a cook—

MRS. CARTER (*hastily*): Send her right in here!

MAID: Yes, Ma'm! (*Exit.*)

MRS. CARTER (*to Flossie*): Do I look attractive enough to make her want to work for me?

FLOSSIE (*critically*): You appear too eager!

MRS. CARTER: You're right! (*She assumes a bored manner.*)
[*The Maid enters followed by Mary.*]

MAID: Mrs. Carter, here's the cook! (*Exit.*)

MRS. CARTER: So you came to answer my advertisement?

MARY: I came to look your place over—and see if it appealed to me!

MRS. CARTER: This job would appeal to anybody with ambition. Why, I—

FLOSSIE (*interrupts*): Can you cook?

MARY (*angrily*): Can I cook? You dare ask me a silly question like that?

MRS. CARTER: My daughter didn't mean any offense!

MARY: How much do you pay?

MRS. CARTER: Why . . . it depends. . . .

MARY: I cost . . . one hundred dollars!

MRS. CARTER: One hundred dollars—that isn't unreasonable pay for a fancy cook—for a month!

MARY: One hundred dollars—a week!

MRS. CARTER (*weakly*): Oh!

MARY (*starts toward the door*): If that is too much—I go!

MRS. CARTER (*to Flossie*): She must think she's the chef from the Ritz!

FLOSSIE: Her price is outrageous, but you can afford it, so why not try her out?

MRS. CARTER: Don't go yet. I might consider paying—(*gasps*) a hundred dollars a week if you can make things like—mushroom timbales, for instance!

MARY (*snaps her fingers*): I can make them—like that!

FLOSSIE (*to Mary*): What's your name, anyhow?

MARY: It's Mary—Elizabeth—Alexandria—Beatrice—Louise—

MRS. CARTER: Hold on! That's plenty!

MARY (*calmly*): The last name is Jones.

FLOSSIE: We'll call you Mary, for short!

MARY: It is too familiar!

MRS. CARTER: Cooks are always called by their first names. Why, I was—

FLOSSIE (*hurriedly*): Mother, shouldn't you ask to see Mary's references?

MRS. CARTER: Golly, I nearly forgot that!

MARY: References?!

FLOSSIE: We mean letters from your past employers telling what a swell cook you are, and why you left your other positions!

MARY (*with dignity*): I say I can cook. That is enough!

MRS. CARTER (*wails*): I felt in my bones there'd be some out about you!

MARY (*goes to the door*): If you feel so—this is the out! (*Opens the door.*)

FLOSSIE (*hastily goes to Mary, and drags her back into the room*): Don't be so jittery!

MARY (*proudly*): You should be honored to have Mary Elizabeth Alexandria Beatrice Louise—er—Jones cook for you!

MRS. CARTER (*sarcastically*): Just why should we be honored?

MARY (*dramatically*): Me, I have cooked—for royalty!

FLOSSIE (*gasps*): She's cooked for royalty!

MRS. CARTER: I've heard that most royalty have weak stomachs!

MARY (*hotly*): That is the lie!

FLOSSIE (*eagerly*): What royalty have you cooked for?

MARY: It is—the—King—Borup!

FLOSSIE (*to Mrs. Carter*): She's cooked for a king!

MARY: He had a great liking for corned beef and cabbage!

MRS. CARTER: That will never do!

MARY: Then I go—

FLOSSIE (*pleads*): Mother, think what it would mean to us, in a social way, to have a cook who has prepared corned beef and cabbage for a king!

MRS. CARTER (*ponders*): I suppose we could serve guests with corned beef à la Borup with cabbage suprême, dolled up with a piquant sauce!

MARY (*impatiently*): I have no time to waste. Am I your cook, or am I not?

MRS. CARTER: This is so sudden!

FLOSSIE: Better close the deal, Mother. She's cooked for a king, you know!

MRS. CARTER: All right, Mary. You're hired!

MARY: But wait! First you must tell me why you want a cook like me?

MRS. CARTER (*confidentially*): It's this way, Mary. I'm rather new here on Park Avenue. I want to break into society, and I figure the best way is through you!

MARY (*gasps*): Through me?

FLOSSIE: You are expected to cook such swell food that everybody will flock here to eat it!

MARY: I fear this is no place for Mary Elizabeth—

MRS. CARTER: There's a future for you in cooking. Take me—

FLOSSIE (*with a warning gesture to Mrs. Carter*): Yes, take mother for your mistress!

MARY (*considers*): I can see this place has possibilities!

MRS. CARTER: Then you'll take the job?

FLOSSIE: Please do!

MARY: I will accept!

MRS. CARTER: What a relief, even at a hundred dollars a week!

FLOSSIE (*to Mary*): We've been without any cook for a week, and we're starved. Couldn't you stay right now, and get us up a nice tasty meal?

MARY: This is most strange, but I will!

MRS. CARTER: Good! Now let's see. You might stir up a lobster bisque, and I think I'd relish a veal soufflé with artichokes, and for dessert—

MARY: I will make those things when the time arrives but now I cook—pork chops.

FLOSSIE (*wails*): Pork chops!

MRS. CARTER: Mary, you must do as I tell you!

MARY: Nobody can dictate to Mary Elizabeth—

MRS. CARTER (*angrily*): All right then, Mary and all the rest of your name—you're fired!

FLOSSIE: Mother! You forget she's cooked for a king!

MRS. CARTER: I'm beginning to have my doubts about that story!

MARY (*coldly*): You question the word of Mary Elizabeth—

MRS. CARTER: Yes, I do! If you'd worked for royalty you'd know enough to respect your betters!

MARY (*goes to the door*): You have insulted me—and so—I leave!

FLOSSIE (*mournfully*): There goes our only chance at having a cook who has fixed corned beef and cabbage for a king!

MARY (*snaps*): And none other than King Borup!

MRS. CARTER (*wilts*): I don't want to be unreasonable, Mary, but—pork chops! Now if you'd broil a T-bone steak—

MARY (*firmly*): Pork chops!

MRS. CARTER: I won't have pork chops!

MARY: Very well. I go! But first I want to say to Mrs. Warren Carter that when you—as you quaintly say—fired Mary Elizabeth Beatrice Louise—er—Jones, you lost—the Duchess of Turbetzky. Good day! (*Dignified exit*.)

MRS. CARTER (*to Flossie, dazed*): What does she mean?

FLOSSIE (*slowly*): The Duchess of Turbetzky—Mother! She was a *Duchess*!

MRS. CARTER: I don't believe it. A real Duchess wouldn't come *here*!

FLOSSIE (*excitedly*): She's one of the crowd of cast-off royalty that hasn't any money.

MRS. CARTER (*in dismay*): I have heard that there are such people around!

FLOSSIE: We might have known that she was one of them, with all her names!

MRS. CARTER (*groans*): I'm not fit to be Mrs. Warren Carter! I'm absolutely dumb to go and fire a real live Duchess!

FLOSSIE (*hurries to the door*): We must get her back!

MRS. CARTER: It's too late. She's left the house by now!

FLOSSIE (*opens the door and calls*): Mary Elizabeth Alexandria—

[*Mary enters*.]

MRS. CARTER: You weren't gone very far!

MARY (*tragically*): I was too stunned to move!

FLOSSIE (*curtsying*): Your Highness, can you ever forgive our stupidity?

MARY: I was never used like this before!

MRS. CARTER: How were we to know you're a Duchess when you said you're a cook?

MARY: To people with understanding, blood will tell!

FLOSSIE (*curtsying*): Your Highness, why did you leave home?

MARY (*sadly*): In my land of Russia there is no place for royalty.

MRS. CARTER (*sympathetically*): You poor thing!

MARY: At home my—what do you call it—hobby was to cook.

Now that I must earn money there is nothing for me to do but—cook!

FLOSSIE: Mother! Her Highness is standing, and you are sitting!

MRS. CARTER (*rises hastily*): Please sit down, Your Highness!

MARY (*sits*): I thank you!

[*Mrs. Carter and Flossie stand uneasily before Mary.*]

MARY (*with a wave of her hand*): You may be seated!

MRS. CARTER (*sits on the edge of a chair*): This doesn't seem right, somehow!

FLOSSIE (*sits*): I never expected to be sitting chummy-like with a Duchess!

MARY: And now is it settled that I become the cook?

MRS. CARTER (*gasps*): Of course not!

MARY: I am sorry—very sorry!

FLOSSIE: We want you to stay here as our guest, don't we, Mother?

MRS. CARTER: We'd love it if you would, Mary, Your Highness—

MARY (*sighs*): I must work to earn my life!

MRS. CARTER: Don't you fuss about money. I'll let you have what you need!

FLOSSIE (*shocked*): Mother! She's too proud to accept charity!

MARY: My imperial pride, it is gone!

MRS. CARTER: I won't hurt your feelings by offering you money but there must be something I can do for you!

MARY: You mention money, well—

FLOSSIE: If Your Highness will condescend to be our cook we will be glad to let you!

MRS. CARTER: I don't believe a Duchess can cook well. It takes talent to do it!

MARY: A Duchess can do anything!

MRS. CARTER: I'm not up on the etiquette of hiring a Duchess to cook for me, but here goes. (*Curtsies.*) Your Highness, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you into our family—as the cook!

MARY (*murmurs*): At one hundred dollars a week!

FLOSSIE (*ecstatically*): This is going to be just wonderful!

MARY: I have one request to make. You will not mention to *anybody* who I am!

FLOSSIE (*dismayed*): What a gyp!

MRS. CARTER: Why can't we tell who you are?

MARY: There will be dire consequences if you breathe a word about who I am!

MRS. CARTER (*to Flossie*): What good'll it do us to have a royal cook if we can't tell about it?

FLOSSIE: Well—she can give us pointers on how to break into society!

MARY: I *cook*!

MRS. CARTER: It'll be sort of fun to have a real Duchess cooking for me!

MARY: I shall cook pork chops and . . . cabbage.

FLOSSIE: That will be marvelous, Your Highness!

[*Mary rises. Mrs. Carter and Flossie jump up at once.*

MARY: May I see my room, please?

MRS. CARTER: Certainly, Your Highness. Flossie, take her to the cook's room!

FLOSSIE: We can't put a Duchess in the servant's quarters!

MRS. CARTER: But we can't have the cook in the guest suite!

FLOSSIE: What can we do?

MARY: I will take the room of the cook. It does not matter where I stay since I fled from the Palace Royale.

FLOSSIE (*awed*): Mother! Did you get that? The Palace Royale!

MRS. CARTER: From the Palace Royale to the Warren Carter mansion. Not so bad!

FLOSSIE (*curtsies*): Your Highness, will you deign to follow me to the servant's quarters?

MARY (*as if she were going to her death*): I come! But wait! You must not call me "Your Highness"!

MRS. CARTER: Oh, excuse us. We aren't up very well on how to address royalty!

MARY: From now on I am the cook, so I suppose you will have to call me Mary!

MRS. CARTER: Yes, Your High—er—Mary!

FLOSSIE: Mary! Gee. It's fun to call a Duchess by her first name!

MARY (*to Mrs. Carter*): And you will keep my secret, yes?

MRS. CARTER (*puts her arm around Mary*): We'll do anything you ask, poor dear!

FLOSSIE (*shocked*): Mother, you mustn't hug a Duchess!

MARY: One never embraces the cook, does one?

MRS. CARTER: Sometimes one does. Say, the hugs I used to get—

FLOSSIE: Mother used to have a cook who persisted in hugging her. Just imagine!

MARY: I can imagine—much!

MRS. CARTER (*to Mary*): Couldn't I fix up a cup of coffee, or something, for you?

FLOSSIE (*to Mrs. Carter*): You can't have the other servants see you cooking for the new cook!

MARY: I desire nothing—now!

FLOSSIE: Your Highness—Mary—Your room is right this way!
(*Exit*.)

MARY (*follows*): The Duchess of Turbetzky is now a common cook. (*Exit*.)

MRS. CARTER: Common cook! Humph! There are worse things than being a cook!

[*Maid enters*.]

MAID: There's another person waiting to see you, Ma'm!

MRS. CARTER: Show her in!

[*Maid exits. Mrs. Carter sits, and assumes a bored expression. The maid returns followed by Mrs. Clyde Ashby. The latter appears angry. Maid exits.*]

MRS. ASHBY: I resent being kept all this time waiting to see you!

MRS. CARTER: There's no use seeing me at all!

MRS. ASHBY: But I have—er—business with you!

MRS. CARTER: My good woman, I already have a cook!

MRS. ASHBY (*adjusts her Oxford glasses*): How extra-ordinary!

MRS. CARTER: I don't see anything odd about my securing a cook—and such a cook, too!

MRS. ASHBY: My good woman—

MRS. CARTER: I ain't a good woman; I'm—

MRS. ASHBY: It's certainly refreshing to hear you admit it!

MRS. CARTER: I was going to say that I am Mrs. Warren Carter.

MRS. ASHBY: May we get down to business at once?

MRS. CARTER: O.K. I presume you are here to apply for the position of cook?

MRS. ASHBY (*emphatically*): I am not!

MRS. CARTER: There's no use trying to sell me anything. I don't want any gold mine stock, or beige stockings, or whatever your stock in trade is!

MRS. ASHBY (haughtily): Can't you see that I am not a sales-woman?

MRS. CARTER: I've recently found out you can't judge a person by appearances!

MRS. ASHBY (looks Mrs. Carter over critically): I think you can!

MRS. CARTER: Well, if you aren't a cook, or an agent, who are you?

MRS. ASHBY: I am Mrs. Clyde Ashby!

MRS. CARTER: No kidding?

MRS. ASHBY (starts to the door): I seem to be only wasting my time here—so I'll bid you good-day, Mrs. Carter!

MRS. CARTER: Don't get sore! I'm willing to listen to your line, no matter what it is!

MRS. ASHBY (scornfully): Well, *really!*

[Flossie enters, excitedly.]

FLOSSIE (to Mrs. Carter): I . . . : e cook let me help her change into a uniform, al . . . e wears awfully common undies!

MRS. ASHBY: My word!

FLOSSIE (turns and sees Mrs. Ashby, and starts): Mrs. Clyde Ashby!

MRS. CARTER: Do you mean to say this woman really is Mrs. Clyde Ashby?

FLOSSIE: Of course she is! Oh, Mother, what have you gone and done now?

MRS. CARTER: I thought she was a cook, or an agent!

FLOSSIE (to Mrs. Ashby): You'll have to excuse Mother. She's just been having quite an unusual time with our new cook!

MRS. ASHBY: And so have you, I gather! It must be a unique experience to find out the intimate details of one's cook's underwear!

MRS. CARTER (hastily): You don't understand. This is no ordinary cook. She's—

FLOSSIE (warningly): Watch your step, Mother!

MRS. CARTER (to Mrs. Ashby): Pardon me for not recognizing you, Mrs. Ashby. You see, I'm new on Park Avenue and I don't know you neighbors yet!

FLOSSIE (curtsies to Mrs. Ashby): Won't you be seated, Your Highness, I mean—Mrs. Ashby!

MRS. ASHBY (*nervously*): I really can't stay—

MRS. CARTER: But you must! We were about to have tea and you shall join us!

MRS. ASHBY (*sits, uneasily*): Well, if you insist!

MRS. CARTER (*to Flossie*): Ring for some tea, please!

FLOSSIE: Do we dare ask the cook to fix it up for us?

MRS. CARTER (*horrified*): Certainly not! Get the maid to do it!

FLOSSIE: I can't. She's gone to the store for a headache powder for the cook!

MRS. ASHBY (*more uneasy*): Please don't bother about tea!

FLOSSIE: I'll go and make some for you myself!

MRS. ASHBY: I couldn't think of putting you to that trouble after you've been tiring yourself—waiting on your cook!

MRS. CARTER (*mysteriously*): I guess even you'd be willing to wait on our cook!

MRS. ASHBY (*freezingly*): You don't seem to realize who I am!

MRS. CARTER: And you don't realize who our cook is!

MRS. ASHBY: And what is more, I don't care!

FLOSSIE (*to Mrs. Carter*): As long as Mrs. Ashby doesn't care for tea, I think I'd better stay here and help you entertain!

MRS. ASHBY: This is not a social call!

MRS. CARTER: We might have known that! Well, what kind of a call is it then?

MRS. ASHBY: I dropped in to see if you'd furnish a cake for my charity bazaar!

MRS. CARTER: Why, I'd love to. I'll make the best cake you ever tasted!

FLOSSIE: Mother, our new cook will make the cake, of course!

MRS. CARTER: Will she?

FLOSSIE (*to Mrs. Ashby*): What charity are you holding your bazaar for?

MRS. ASHBY: The local Maternity Hospital!

MRS. CARTER: Why, I didn't realize there was one on Park Avenue!

MRS. ASHBY: Indeed, there is, and our Bazaar will be held in Mrs. Greinlander's apartment.

FLOSSIE: Can we come to the Bazaar?

MRS. ASHBY: Certainly; I hope you'll patronize our booths generously!

MRS. CARTER: We'll buy a lot. Where is the hospital, anyway?

MRS. ASHBY: Right up on Broadway!

FLOSSIE: The only hospital I ever heard of there is the one for stray cats!

MRS. ASHBY (*graciously*): That's the one I mean!

FLOSSIE (*in an undertone*): Suffering cats!

MRS. CARTER: I can't go to a bazaar at that place. I'm allergic to cats!

FLOSSIE: They give Mother the asthma!

MRS. ASHBY: What a pity. The bazaar will be quite a social function!

MRS. CARTER (*eagerly*): I'll be there!

MRS. ASHBY: But how about your asthma?

FLOSSIE: The doctor'll have to give Mother an inoculation for the social function.

MRS. ASHBY: Excellent! I know you won't want to miss the opportunity of buying the delightful things we're selling at the bazaar.

MRS. CARTER: When do you want me—er—or my cook to make the cake for the sale?

MRS. ASHBY: The bazaar will be next Saturday

[*Mary enters. She wears a uniform, and carries a tea tray.*]

MARY: Your tea, Madam!

MRS. CARTER (*jumps up and takes the tray from Mary*): You shouldn't have bothered to do this for us, your—your—

FLOSSIE (*curtsies to Mary*): You're too kind!

MRS. ASHBY: This is strange indeed!

MRS. CARTER (*to Mary*): It's terrible for you to be doing this—for me!

MRS. ASHBY (*studies Mary through her Oxford glasses*): Just who is this person?

FLOSSIE (*flustered*): Let me present you to—

MARY (*quickly*): The new cook!

MRS. ASHBY: I'm not accustomed to meeting cooks as my equals!

MRS. CARTER (*sharply*): You aren't? Well, let me tell you that cooks are just as good as anybody else!

MRS. ASHBY: No doubt they are all right in their proper place!

MARY (*hands tea to Mrs. Ashby*): Your tea, Madam!

MRS. ASHBY (*takes the tea*): A slice of lemon, please!

MARY: There is no lemon! *

FLOSSIE: Why, yes, there's some lemon in the refrigerator!

MARY (*firmly*): There is no lemon!

MRS. CARTER (*warningly, to Flossie*): There's no lemon. says so!

FLOSSIE: I was wrong. There is no lemon!

MRS. ASHBY: I can take my tea plain!

[*Mary serves tea to Mrs. Carter.*]

MRS. CARTER (*nervously*): You mustn't wait on *me*!

FLOSSIE (*to Mrs. Ashby*): You see, Mother doesn't take afternoon tea. She's—on a diet at present!

MRS. ASHBY (*interested*): What kind of a diet are *you* on?

MRS. CARTER: I can't take afternoon tea, that's all!

FLOSSIE (*laughs nervously*): She's allergic to tea, you know!

MRS. ASHBY (*tastes her tea, and then puts her cup down hastily*): I don't wonder you're allergic to *this* kind of tea!

FLOSSIE (*hastily tries the tea*): It does taste awful. Something's the matter with it!

MARY (*firmly*): The tea is prepared the way I served it—in my last position!

FLOSSIE (*drinks her tea*): It's different tasting, but—wonderful!

MRS. CARTER (*to Mary*): Won't you have a cup of tea with us?

MRS. ASHBY (*rises*): This is the limit!

FLOSSIE: You don't understand!

MRS. ASHBY: And I don't care to understand any more about you—or your cook!

MRS. CARTER: Don't go off mad, Mrs. Ashby!

MRS. ASHBY: This is just the sort of treatment I should have expected from the second Mrs. Warren Carter!

[*Mary places tea cups on the tray*.]

FLOSSIE: Mrs. Clyde Ashby! If you only knew—

MRS. ASHBY: I know only too well, and I fear I shall have to withdraw my invitation for you to attend the charity bazaar!

MRS. CARTER: Can't we come, after all?

FLOSSIE (*pleads*): Not if we'll buy lots of things?

MRS. ASHBY: The bazaar is to be an outstanding social event, and only people with some knowledge of the social graces will be present. You have proved to me that you wouldn't fit at such an occasion!

MRS. CARTER: Just why wouldn't we fit?

MRS. ASHBY: For one thing, you wouldn't know how to act before—royalty!

FLOSSIE (*giggles*): Not know how to act before royalty, you say?

MRS. CARTER: That's a scream, isn't it, Mary?

MARY: Yes, Madam.

MRS. ASHBY: You cannot conduct yourself properly with your own cook, so what would you do in the presence of royalty?

FLOSSIE: We'd do great! You see, we're on intimate terms with royalty now!

MRS. ASHBY (*skeptically*): No doubt!

MRS. CARTER: But it's the truth. You tell her it is, Mary!

MARY: I am the cook. I know nothing beside that!

MRS. ASHBY (*impatiently*): I'm not interested in your cook's opinions concerning your brand of royalty!

FLOSSIE: Ours is just as royal as yours!

MRS. ASHBY: Indeed! I am entertaining none other than the Princess Aileen!

MARY (*gasps*): Not the Princess Aileen of Garth?

MRS. ASHBY (*coldly*): Yes. She is to attend the bazaar!

MRS. CARTER: This is marvelous!

MRS. ASHBY: Naturally I am honored to have the privilege of entertaining such an important personage. She's staying at my home at present!

FLOSSIE: It's a real social triumph to have royalty in your home, isn't it?

MRS. ASHBY: Certainly it is!

MRS. CARTER: Would I be welcomed into Park Avenue society if it were known that I am entertaining royalty in my home right now?

MRS. ASHBY: Your kind of royalty wouldn't count!

FLOSSIE: But listen—

MARY (*hisses*): Remember the dire consequences!

MRS. CARTER (*recklessly*): I'm going to make the top of the social ladder at one leap!

MRS. ASHBY (*startled*): Don't leap, please!

MRS. CARTER: I have under my roof at this moment just as royal a person as your Princess Aileen!

MARY (*warningly*): Madam!

MRS. CARTER (*dramatically indicating Mary*): It's her!

MARY: Why, Madam!

MRS. ASHBY (*frightened*): Yes, yes! Of course! The cook! I imagine she makes unusually good cocktails by the evidences I have! Well, I must hurry right home now to my guest! (*goes hastily to the door*)

MRS. CARTER (*forcibly detains Mrs. Ashby*): You must listen to me!

FLOSSIE: Tell her quick before she gets away!

[*Mary signals warningly to Mrs. Carter.*]

MRS. CARTER: Mrs. Clyde Ashby, make you acquainted with—

FLOSSIE: That isn't the proper way to introduce royalty! This is the way it's done. (*Curtseys to Mary.*) May I have the honor of presenting to you—

MARY: No!

MRS. ASHBY: This is ridiculous!

MRS. CARTER (*holding Mrs. Ashby firmly*): Our cook isn't a cook at all!

MRS. ASHBY (*struggling to get away*): I don't want to hear any more about your cook!

FLOSSIE: But our cook is—

MARY: If you tell, I warn you . . . the consequence. . . .

MRS. CARTER: The consequence will be that I break into Park Avenue society!

FLOSSIE (*indicates Mary*): This woman is posing as a cook but she is really Mary Elizabeth Alexandria Beatrice Louise—

MARY (*emphatically*): Jones!

MRS. CARTER (*triumphantly*): Otherwise known as the Duchess of Turbetzky!

MARY: I might have known you couldn't keep your mouth shut!

MRS. ASHBY: The Duchess of Turbetzky!

FLOSSIE (*impressively*): Her Highness, the Duchess of Turbetzky. (*Curtsies to Mary.*)

MRS. ASHBY: Why is she posing as your cook?

MRS. CARTER (*eagerly*): It's this way; Mary, er—Her Highness, was short of money so we're helping her out by letting her cook for us, see?

MRS. ASHBY: How perfectly frightful!

FLOSSIE: What's so terrible about having a Duchess cook for us?

MRS. ASHBY: The mere fact of a Duchess cooking for *you*!

MARY: It does not matter for whom I cook since the wage is large!

MRS. ASHBY (*cordially*): Your Highness, you must come right home with *me*!

MRS. CARTER (*to Mrs. Ashby*): You needn't try to get my cook away from me because you've already got one!

FLOSSIE: And you needn't try to swipe our royalty because you have a Princess now!

MRS. ASHBY (*ignores Mrs. Carter, and Flossie, and addresses Mary*): Will Your Highness do me the honor of becoming my guest for as long as you wish to stay?

MARY (*decidedly*): Thank you, Madam, but that I cannot do!

MRS. CARTER: I tried to have her for my guest but she refused!

MRS. ASHBY: I can well understand her refusing *you*!

MRS. CARTER: I can take just as good care of her as you can, Mrs. Ashby!

MARY (*to Mrs. Carter*): Remember, I told you if you made known my secret there would be dire consequences!

FLOSSIE: Mrs. Ashby won't mention it to anybody, I'm sure!

MRS. ASHBY: I don't see why Your Highness wishes to remain incognito?

MARY (*darkly*): The political reason!

MRS. ASHBY: Then I won't tell anybody, that is, except the Princess Aileen!

MARY (*agitatedly*): She must never know I am here!

MRS. ASHBY: But she is your cousin!

MARY (*dramatically*): The family intrigue . . . danger. . . .

MRS. ASHBY (*laughs*): There'll be no danger from the Princess Aileen. She is the kindest person I've ever had the pleasure of knowing!

MARY: She would be much kinder to Mrs. Clyde Ashby than to—me!

MRS. ASHBY: I shall go and bring her here to you at once!

MRS. CARTER: Yes, go and get the Princess Aileen right away!

FLOSSIE (*gloats*): A Princess—and a Duchess—and Mrs. Clyde Ashby thrown in, too, all in our house. Gee, I must be dreaming!

MARY: I forbid having the Princess Aileen come here! /

MRS. ASHBY (*covetously*): You royalty are always having your little differences. I am a wonderful manager, and I shall reunite your two branches of the house of Garth!

MRS. CARTER: I want a part in patching up this royal misunderstanding!

FLOSSIE: After all, we discovered the Duchess!

MRS. ASHBY (*to Mrs. Carter*): You keep out of this, and if you do, I'll see that you have a place in Park Avenue society!

MRS. CARTER (*drops onto the divan*): I'm perfectly happy!

FLOSSIE: This is supreme!

MARY (*to Mrs. Ashby*): Princess Aileen and I will never become reconciled!

MRS. ASHBY: Oh yes, you will! I'm going for the Princess now. (*Goes to the door, then addresses Mrs. Carter.*) You keep the Duchess until we come back!

MRS. CARTER: You bet I will!

MARY: I told you if you made known my identity there would be dire consequences—and I mean it—so beware!

MRS. ASHBY: You can't frighten me out of having this triumph!

MARY: Since you will not respect my wish I will slip out of your

lives—quickly, and silently. (*Brushes Mrs. Ashby aside and stands in the doorway*)

MRS. CARTER (*wails*): Don't go off this way, Your Highness!

FLOSSIE: We'll keep mum about who you are if you'll only stay here!

MARY: It is too late now. I go—but first I shall say to you—
(*whips a pistol from a concealed pocket in her skirt*) hands up, there! Pass me all the jewelry you folks are wearing, and make it snappy!

MRS. ASHBY (*amazed*): Your Highness!

MARY: Shut up. You jammed my game plenty. I was going to wait until there was a grand get-together of all Park Avenue swells and make a good haul. You spoilt it. Now you pay for it. Come on, hand it out. (*She advances toward them.*)

MRS. CARTER (*frightened*): A cook. . . .

FLOSSIE (*scornfully*): A crook!

[*As the CURTAIN FALLS Mary is gathering the jewelry from three astonished and frightened women.*

HEAVENLY MYSTERY

BY EMILIE SARTER

CHARACTERS

CHESTER PRICE, *a handsome, clean, young boy*
BILL PRICE, *Chester's fourteen-year-old brother*
MILDRED YOUNG, *a plump and slow youngster*
ELEANOR BRONSON, *a candid youngster*
LILLIAN CLAYTON, *a quiet, self-contained girl*
JACK MILFORD, *much like Chester, clean, neat and trim*
All the characters have good manners, however familiar they may be among themselves.

Time: The present, on a sultry Saturday morning in summer.

Place: The living room of the Price summer home.

COSTUMES

All the costumes are modern.

PROPERTIES

The properties are as follows: Couch, desk, and chair. Large settee with end tables. Oblong table. Telephone table and telephone. Other furniture you may have. Lamp. Newspaper and magazines. A few odd lamps, if you have them. Desk articles. Pictures. Kite made of a silk handkerchief. Strips of wood; stick with twine; a muslin tail for a kite; narrow pieces of paper; copper wire; a pair of pliers; small tacks or thumb tacks. Cigar box. Packages. Silver money and bill, or imitation of it. Key. Another kite that looks all wet. An additional handbag with a bent handle (it must look like Lillian's). Screw driver. A bell attached to the wall. Lump of silver. As the author suggests, use a ball of wrapped tin foil with odd lumps all over it.

LIGHTING

In this play the lighting will have to be handled carefully and skillfully, for it is an important part of the play. Follow the directions of the author in every detail.

The lightning can be imitated by the sudden zig-zagging of a lit flashlight, and the thunder by a drum or with a sheet of tin. You will also find thunder in records which are quite inexpensive to buy.

NOTES

There should be a black-out; or, the curtain can be lowered during the play to indicate the passing of a few minutes and to give time and opportunity to re-arrange props.

Here is a description by Benjamin Franklin of the kite he must have used for his experiment and a duplicate of which is used in this play.

"Make a small cross of two light strips of cedar, the arms so long as to reach to the four corners of a large, thin silk handkerchief when extended; tie the corners of the handkerchief to the extremities of the cross so you have the body of a kite which being properly accommodated with a tail, loop and string will rise in the air like those made of paper, but this being of silk, is fitter to bear the wet and wind of a thunder gust without tearing.

"To the top of the upright stick of the cross is to be fixed a very sharp pointed wire rising a foot or more above the wood. To the end of the twine next the hand is to be tied a silk ribbon and where the silk and twine join a key may be fastened.

"This kite is to be raised when a thunder gust appears to be coming on and the person who holds the string must stand within a door or window or under some cover so that the silk ribbon may not be wet; and care must be taken that the twine does not touch the frame of the door or window.

"As soon as any of the thunder clouds come over the kite, the pointed wire will draw the electric fire from them and the kite with all the twine will be electrified and the loose filaments of the twine will stand out every way and be attracted by an approaching finger. And when the rain has wetted the kite

and twine so that it can conduct the electric fire fully, you will find it stream out plentifully from the key on the approach of your knuckle . . ."

Benjamin Franklin

This play might be used as a project in classroom work supplementing a course in electricity.

SETTING

At center back is a wide-open window, through which can be seen an exterior porch enclosed with windows, also open. The porch has a door, at back, left. On the porch, beneath the living room window, is a couch on which Chester lies, unseen by audience, at rise of curtain.

Interior back left is door to living room. When this door is opened, the porch door can be seen.

There is an electric light switch on wall, back left, next to door, and a doorbell above the door. Below the light switch is a low table or other piece of furniture with sufficient space between bottom and floor to permit a large ball to roll under it.

Up left, a door leads to other parts of house.

Down left, there is a desk and chair. Chairs are also against walls. In center there is a large settee with end tables. Up right is a door leading to kitchen and back of house. Down right is a large old-fashioned, brick fireplace. Before fireplace is an oblong table, with an armchair behind it, and a chair at each end.

At window, center back, is a telephone table with telephone. Other furniture completes room.

On oblong table before fireplace, there is a lamp and newspapers or magazines. Other lamps and perhaps an overhead light or wall brackets and floor lamps can be used.

On desk can be the usual desk articles. Desk has several drawers.

There are pictures on the walls, but all wide wall spaces have a poster tacked on them, and there is a large poster tacked on the fireplace. The poster announces the annual play by the young set of the summer colony. Any popular play may be chosen. The names of the cast should be prominently displayed on the posters and the prices of tickets must also be legible.

After Bill enters and goes to his desk he is occupied throughout, except where dialogue and action indicate the contrary, with the preparation of a kite made of a silk handkerchief.

HEAVENLY MYSTERY

In the drawer of his desk are strips of wood; a stick with yards of string wrapped around it; a tail made of a long narrow strip of muslin; narrow pieces of paper; a copper wire; a pair of pliers; small tacks or thumb tacks, and everything required to make a completed kite to fly in wind and storm.

Bill makes a cross of the two long strips of wood. To each of the four ends he ties a corner of a large silk handkerchief. The tail is to be tied to one end of one of the sticks at the other end of which a long copper wire is to be tied. At the extreme end of the tail, several inches apart, narrow strips of paper are to be knotted into it. The string is attached to the wood where the two pieces join.

During most of the action, soon after rise of curtain, the stage darkens gradually with the oncoming storm, and distant flashes of lightning, followed by rolls of thunder at proper, scientific intervals can be seen and heard. As the storm nears, the flashes and thunder are more frequent and thunder follows lightning much more quickly. The timing must be carefully exact.

THE PLAY

As soon as the curtain rises, the telephone begins to ring. Chester, unseen by the audience, lies on the couch on the porch, apparently reading a book. One leg is flung over one raised knee. His foot moves up and down, stops as telephone rings. This action must be seen and should be amusing. One hand comes up and over the window sill groping for the telephone, finds it and carries it outside. Chester talks from the porch, loud enough to let audience hear.

CHESTER (outside): Hello! Yeah, this is Chester. Sure, I'm awake. The money? It's in the desk drawer. Why? What? (Chester's legs go down and the rest of him comes up. He can now be seen by the audience, as he sits sidewise, outside, half facing the living room window. During dialogue he rises and climbs into living room through window.) No, I didn't see the morning paper. I guess my Dad took it. He and Mother had to leave early this morning for the city. Sure the money's safe. Well, wait a minute, I'll go see. (He puts 'phone down.) Hang on a minute. (Goes to desk, pulls out lower drawer, removes cigar box, opens it, looks inside, gives a sigh of relief

HEAVENLY MYSTERY

at its contents, returns box to drawer, pushes drawer shut with foot, returns to telephone.) It's all here, Jack. The money's safe. Right! We ought to get it counted right away and deposited in the bank. (*Looks at posters on walls and chimney.*) With all these posters plastered all over the village, it's anybody's guess that there is plenty of cash lying around loose in our homes. It happened last night during the storm, huh? All they know is that someone must have been in the house before they went out? No currency was touched? You mean, the thief left sixty-five dollars in bills but took all the loose change. Maybe it's his mark. Like "The Green Hornet" or "The Bat." Yes. Well, listen, Jack, you get hold of Lillian and I'll telephone Eleanor and Mildred. Get right over here with your ticket collections and we'll count the money and get it into the bank. O.K. Goodbye.

[Chester replaces 'phone thoughtfully, keeping his hand on it for a moment; then removing it again, dials a number. As he waits, he looks searchingly around the room. A door backstage slams. Chester starts; then turns, telephone to his ear; stands firmly, legs spread, looking toward door upper left. He puts his unoccupied hand into his coat pocket and flexes it to appear as though he could, very possibly, have a gun in that pocket. Bill enters, and Chester relaxes.]

BILL: Hiya, Ches. You know what . . . ? (*Bill stops dead and stares at Chester.*) Say! What's the matter with you? Seen a ghost?

CHESTER (*waves Bill to silence as he speaks into the 'phone*): Hello? Oh, hello, Mr. Bronson, is Eleanor there? This is Chester Price. She isn't? Oh, she's over at the Hollisters? Yes, sir, Jack Milford just telephoned. (*Bill on his way toward desk pauses, and turns toward Chester, listening to the one-sided conversation.*) Yes, it does look like an inside job. (*Bill, his hands in his pockets, shrugs and looks inquiringly about.*) No windows nor doors open; all locked from the inside. (*Bill pricks up his ears and moves closer to Chester, listening attentively.*) Yes, wasn't that a peculiar thing to do: take all the heavy stuff and leave the paper money? (*Bill is now opposite Chester and stares at him as he listens.*) Yes, I should think the sheriff would be baffled. (*Chester takes a step or two back and forth.*) Yes, sir, that's why I'm calling Eleanor. (*Bill seats himself on window sill gesticulating to Chester to hasten the end of the conversation.*) Yes, ask her to bring her

ticket money over here right away and we'll get it counted and go to the bank with it for safe keeping. (*Bill looks out of window at back, bends down to see beneath the shades on porch windows what the weather looks like.*) Yes, there's a storm coming. And it's Saturday—bank closes at noon. All right. (*Prepares to hang up.*) What's that, sir? Lillian Clayton? Yes, Jack is bringing her. Oh, we like her a lot. Yes, we're glad her family came here this summer. Oh, before I forget, tell Eleanor to pick up Mildred. Yes, sir, thank you. Goodbye. (*Puts back 'phone.*) Gosh, that man likes to talk!

BILL: Yes, but what's it all about? What happened? Somebody get robbed?

CHESTER: Yes. (*Moves downstage, trying to think it out.*) The Hollisters. (*Bill gets off window sill and walks toward desk down left, listening to Chester.*) Seems some one got inside their house some time late yesterday afternoon and waited until they went out to dinner, then robbed the place.

BILL: But where was their maid?

CHESTER: It was her day off. The Hollisters always go to the club for dinner on Friday night. When they got home around midnight last night—they had to wait until the storm was over—they found their living room in a mess. All Mr. Hollister's silver tennis trophies were gone; some small silver ornaments and some jewelry that Mrs. Hollister took off at the last minute and put in a drawer with about fifteen dollars in halves and quarters.

BILL (*gives a low whistle*): Any clues? (*Bill straddles the chair at desk and looks thoughtfully into space.*)

CHESTER: If you can call it a clue. The thief did not take about sixty-five dollars in currency that Mr. Hollister had in the same drawer with the quarters and half-dollars that the thief did take!

BILL: H'm! I guess maybe the thief left the bills because they could be traced to him by their serial numbers.

CHESTER: That's right! (*Moves as though to go to telephone.*) I wonder if the sheriff thought of that.

BILL: Sure! That's his business. Has he got any theories?

CHESTER: Eleanor's father said that the sheriff thinks it was an inside job. All the doors and windows were bolted and the porch door has a spring lock.

[*Faint THUNDER*]

BILL (*unstraddling the chair, turns and sits down properly and*

begins his preparations for making his kite): I doubt if they'll ever find the thief. He had a good start last night and was a long way off before the Hollisters got home. (Chester goes to desk down left, opens a drawer at Bill's left, removes cigar box. Bill observes his action.) That's your ticket money, isn't it?

CHESTER: Yes. (Moves to table down right.)

BILL (opening desk drawers and removing required articles, putting them on top of desk): Is it all there?

CHESTER: Uh-huh. (A sound like a buzz is heard; both boys start, look at each other and strain their ears.) What's that? (Chester goes to door up right, pauses, then suddenly pushes it open swiftly. As there is nothing there, he leans out and pulls it shut.) Guess we're hearing things. (Returns to table.)

BILL: Better get that money in a safer place than a desk drawer.

CHESTER: That's just what I'm going to do. Jack and the girls are coming over to count what they took in and then we're going to take the whole thing down to the bank. . . .

[A loud banging is heard on the porch door, outside. Chester quickly pulls a newspaper over cigar box. Bill, who has been stooping over a drawer, straightens and quickly rises from his chair, grasping it in both hands ready to hurl at an intruder.

VOICES (outside): Hey! Nobody home?

BILL (puts down chair, grins, goes to door): It's the brats.

Gosh, for a minute, I thought . . . (Laughs sheepishly as he goes out to open the porch door.)

CHESTER: Umh, me too!

[Chester arranges table by clearing a space nearest the fireplace and the audience.

BILL (outside): Hi, brats, why the racket? Can't you ring the bell?

MILDRED (outside, shrilly): Ring the bell! (Enters.) We did!

[Mildred is wearing summer clothes, and a slicker. She carries a package and moves toward Chester.

MILDRED: Hi, Ches! (Puts package on table.) There!

CHESTER: Hi!

ELEANOR (enters with a dash, followed by Bill): Hi! We just came from the Hollisters. Dad came over and told us you wanted me to bring the money, et cetera.

MILDRED: Their living room was all upset; things scattered everywhere.

ELEANOR: Say! What happened to your bell? We punched it

about half a hundred times. My forefinger's numb. (*Pantomimes.*)

CHESTER: That's funny. It didn't ring, did it Bill?

BILL: They probably barely touched it. You know how they do things. (*Bill goes to his desk.*)

ELEANOR (*turning on Bill*): Well, I like that. (*Moves toward table, down right, pretends to go limp under weight of package which she quickly deposits on table. She is also in summer clothes topped by a slicker.*) I pressed that button; then Mildred pressed, then I pressed. . . .

BILL (*grinning*): Say, you know what, Chester? I'll bet that buzzing sound we heard was the brats here. (*Indicates Mildred and Eleanor, then goes out to try bell for himself.*)

MILDRED (*removing her slicker*): Well, what do you think of the burglary, Ches?

ELEANOR: It's omnibus, that's what.

MILDRED (*drily*): You mean ominous. (*Bell buzzes loudly. Eleanor and Mildred squeal.*) What's that?

CHESTER: Don't get excited. It's only the bell—the same bell you rang. Bill's out there trying to find out why it buzzes when it should ring.

[*Eleanor removes her slicker and drops it on settee.*]

MILDRED: What's the matter with it?

CHESTER: It's out of order, obviously. It gets that way every once in a while.

ELEANOR: Do you suppose (*she looks from Mildred to Chester*) it might have been put out of order . . . on purpose?

MILDRED (*turning upon Eleanor*): What do you mean, Elly?

ELEANOR: Well, after last night.

CHESTER: Don't be silly.

BILL (*enters*): Didn't ring, did it? What about the lights? (*Switches lights on and off.*) They're all right.

CHESTER (*looking up at bell above living room door*): Guess the wire pulled out again.

[*Bill takes a chair at desk, places it under bell, climbs on chair and examines bell; puts it in order. Eleanor and Mildred stand beneath him, looking up, their backs to audience, then join Chester at table.*]

MILDRED: No one seems to know who did it. You should see what a mess the living room is in, but they can't find a single clue and no finger prints except the Hollisters' and the maid's. . . .

CHESTER: No finger prints at all? (*Mildred and Eleanor shake their heads.*) Then the thief wore gloves.

ELEANOR: Oh, undoobit—ably. (*Mispronouncing "indubitably" at which Mildred thrusts forward her head.*)

MILDRED: Ouch! Not "undubit" but "indew"—(*Eleanor, not catching the drift, is momentarily non-plussed.*)

ELEANOR (*recovering*): Oh—well, anyway wearing gloves is an old detective-story custom—in-dew-(accent)-bit-a-bly—you're sure that's right? (*Mildred nods; Eleanor repeats it to herself and Bill and Chester grin.*)

BILL: What about footprints—indubitably the thief must have worn shoes. (*Eleanor pantomimes a swing at Bill's jaw as Bill gets down from chair and dusts his hands as he dodges.*)

MILDRED: If there were any, they were washed away by the rain, last night.

CHESTER: Then it proves that he got in some time during the day, before it started to rain. (*Bill shrugs, exits door to porch to test the bell.*)

ELEANOR: I wonder.

MILDRED: Of course! A thief wouldn't be so dumb as to enter a house in a pouring rain and leave a lot of muddy foot prints. (*Bell rings suddenly, loud and long.*) Eeeee! (*Eleanor and Chester jump; Mildred clutches Eleanor's arm and clings.*)

ELEANOR (*nervously, as Mildred clings more closely*): Owl! Don't do that, Mildred. You make me scareder than I am.

BILL (*enters*): Well, it rang that time.

ELEANOR (*with what she considers to be fine sarcasm*): A mere trickle . . . (*Bill grins*) . . . I mean tinkle!

MILDRED: Next time tell us in advance you're going to ring that bell.

ELEANOR: Goodness, yes, what with robberies and bells ringing when you least expect them. You want me to turn into a johnny-jump-over?

MILDRED: You mean a johnny-jump-up.

ELEANOR: Johnny-jump-up, or johnny-jump-over—what's the difference if it makes me jump? (*Bell rings and she jumps.*) There!

MILDRED: Say, what is this? A haunted house?

CHESTER: That bell didn't ring itself. (*Looks out of living room window, stretching his body to do so.*) What makes you so nervous? (*Bill exits door below left, to open porch door.*)

MILDRED: Nervous? Who wouldn't be nervous with bells buzzing and then ringing and a thief around loose somewhere.

ELEANOR (*who has gone to living room window*): It's only Lillian and Jack. (*Waves a hand.*) Hi, you two. Calm down, Milly, it's broad daylight and we're one to six now, I mean we're six to his one—the burglar's . . .

MILDRED (*shakes her head*): You never get things straight, Elly.

LILLIAN (*enters, wearing a very smart light summer coat and carrying a large, metal framed handbag; Jack follows, in summer clothes, carrying two packages*): Hello, there. (*Lillian smiles and nods to all.*) Exciting news, this morning, isn't it?

[Jack moves toward table down right as Bill enters, slamming door behind him, making Eleanor and Mildred start. Each squeals and they rush Bill. Jack puts down his packages on table; Lillian removes her coat and carefully places it, with her handbag, on settee.]

JACK: What do you make of it, Chester? I can't figure out why a thief would want to load himself down with a lot of heavy silver. Lift that! (*Jack lifts one of the packages and passes it to Chester.*) These are mostly dimes, quarters and half dollars. If silver coin is as heavy as that what must knives and forks and trophy cups weigh?

MILDRED (*who with Eleanor has been admiring Lillian's frock and trying on her coat while listening to the boys*): Plenty! You'd know if you ever had to wash and polish silver.

ELEANOR: You bet.

BILL (*goes to table, lifts package after package*): Wow! They are heavy. (*Low rumble of thunder is heard.*) Say, I better get back to work. (*Goes to desk.*)

CHESTER: That goes for us, too. If we don't want our money stolen we better get it counted and to the bank right away. (*Pulls out chair and sits down, prepares to count money and write down sums. Girls also move toward chairs for same purpose.*)

JACK (*seating himself at head of table as Chester draws up chairs needed*): Right! The sooner we get this to the bank, the better!

BILL (*who has been listening to the nearing thunder*): You'll never make it now. (*Bill works quickly on his kite, tying the two sticks of wood together, then the handkerchief to the wood, etc., all of which is timed with the dialogue.*)

JACK: Why not?

BILL: The storm will be here before you've finished counting.
JACK: Well, we can take your car, then, can't we? How about it, Ches?

CHESTER: I'm afraid not. My mother and dad took it. They had to go to town early this morning.

MILDRED (*each is unwrapping his or her own package and stacking coins, bills, etc., while counting, all timed with dialogue*): Say! What was that you called it, Elly? Oh, yes, that certainly looks 'omnibus' for your mother and father. (*Eleanor pantomimes action of throwing something at Mildred.*) Getting out early in the morning before anybody else is up and after a robbery last night only a few doors away, and no morning paper and the bell stops ringing (*breathless*) say, where were your parents (*points an accusing finger*) last night at seven o'clock?

CHESTER (*not at once perceiving that Mildred is joking; Bill looks at her, winks at others, grins*): You're not insinuating . . . (*All burst into laughter.*)

BILL: Why not?

ELEANOR: Of course! Everybody's guilty until proved innocent.

BILL: Not in this country, they're not. Everybody's innocent until proved guilty.

MILDRED: Oh, you know Eleanor. She always gets things twisted.

BILL: Well, then, Elly, if you've finished counting, come here and twist these pieces of paper and tie them on this tail, will you?

ELEANOR: You bet. My money's all counted and written down on a slip of paper. There! (*Pushes paper which she has taken from her package toward Chester.*) My dad counted it, too, and made up the list—so many dimes, quarters, half dollars, dollars and bills. (*Rises and goes to Bill dragging her chair after her.*)

CHESTER (*takes package and slip*): O.K., I'll check it.

ELEANOR: Say, Bill, you getting ready to try that experiment? (*Puts chair next to Bill's and seats herself, both face audience.*)

BILL: Yup! Missed out on it last night. Went to bed and fell asleep before the storm broke.

MILDRED (*who has been listening*): Goodness, maybe if you had been up and tried it last night, you might have seen the burglar coming out of Hollisters' house.

LILLIAN (*who has been watching Bill and his work*): Maybe if he had tried what, Mildred?

MILDRED: That experiment.

ELEANOR (*watching as Bill shows her how to twist the papers and tie them to the tail of the kite*): You know. We read about it in school. (*Takes papers from Bill and starts twisting*) The one that Benjamin Franklin. . . . (*Telephone rings. Chester goes to telephone table and picks up 'phone as others remain quiet and are busy at their tasks*.)

CHESTER: Hello? (*pause*) Hello? Hello, hello! What? (*all look at him*) I can't hear you. Wha. . . . (*shrugs and puts back phone*) I'm, hung up, what do you think of that!

JACK: Know who it was? (*All gaze at Chester*.)

CHESTER: No, I don't.

MILDRED: You don't? Didn't you recognize the voice?

CHESTER: No. It sounded foreign.

ELEANOR (*working*): What did he say?

CHESTER: All I could understand was something that sounded like "Excuse it please."

LILLIAN: Was it a man's voice?

CHESTER: I think so.

ELEANOR: Maybe he was 'phoning to see if anyone was at home, and if not, he'd come and rob the place.

MILDRED: Eleanor! That's her imagination again!

ELEANOR: But haven't you read such things in the newspapers? You know that's the way they do it. Somebody telephones a house or an apartment and if there is no answer they come and rob it.

JACK: Quit it, Elly. It was probably a wrong number; and anyway, it's broad daylight.

ELEANOR: But that's just it. They do it in broad daylight, and why not, if no one is at home?

LILLIAN: Eleanor, you'll give me the jitters. (*Thunder*.) There! maybe he was trying to get in before the storm breaks.

JACK: Change the subject for heaven's sake. There are six of us here and in a half hour this money will be safe in the bank, if that's what anyone is after.

CHESTER: Listen, Lillian, you mustn't take Eleanor seriously. When you know us better you'll realize that Eleanor suffers occasionally from hallucinations.

ELEANOR: You're wrong there, Ches. That's one two dollar word I know the meaning of. Believe me, there's no hallucination about someone telephoning and then coming around to rob your house.

JACK (*shaking his head*): You're all twisted again, Elly. If you answer the 'phone the house won't be robbed because there's somebody at home and if your house is robbed how do you know whether somebody telephoned first since you weren't at home?

MILDRED: My goodness, I thought we were going to change the subject.

[*The stage now darkens perceptibly. A flash of lightning startles them.*

JACK: Look how dark it's getting. (*He pulls chain on table lamp light.*) We'd better hurry.

[*Rumble of thunder follows the lightning.*

MILDRED: We'll never get to the bank now.

CHESTER: Doesn't look like it. (*to Bill*) Hey, you, Ben Franklin, how long will this storm last? Shall we be able to make it before twelve o'clock? (*Looks at his wrist watch.*) It's only a quarter after ten now.

BILL (*listens intently, without stopping his work*): Storm will be right overhead in about twelve or fifteen minutes. May take twenty minutes to a half hour to pass over this town. You'll get to the bank after that.

LILLIAN: Why, Billy, how can you tell? Are you a weather prophet?

ELEANOR: He's a me . . . me . . . me . . .

MILDRED (*stretching*): Hey, you, warming up for a song? (*Mildred puts thumb and forefinger over the bones of her nose*) Mi, mi, mi . . . (*very nasally. All laugh.*)

ELEANOR: Well, you tell her then, smarty.

MILDRED: Don't ask *me* to pronounce that word. It's got too many syllables. I always drop a few.

LILLIAN: Goodness, Billy, whatever is it then that you are?

BILL (*somewhat embarrassed*): Aw, I'm not. I'm only studying to be one.

LILLIAN: But what is it?

BILL: You know. A me-te-or-ol-o-gist. Accent on the ol.

ELEANOR (*in admiration*): My! Can't he roll that over his tongue! Me-te-or-ol-ol-ol—well, anyway that's somebody who studies temperatures. . . .

MILDRED: That's a doctor, dumbbell.

BILL: We meteorologists study temperatures, too, Mildred, but not by means of the human pulse.

ELEANOR: There, you see, I *was* right. Temperature, and

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weather and storms, isn't it, Bill? (*Eleanor has finished tying papers into the tail and now holds it up for inspection.*)

BILL (*nods to Eleanor, then inspects tail*): Swell! Boy, oh, boy, that's a honey of a storm. Better than last night.

[*A terrific flash of lightning, followed shortly by a crash of thunder startles them all. Mildred screams and covers her eyes and ears.*]

BILL (*shaking his head pityingly at her and pulling Eleanor's skirt*): Mildred's suffering from ceraunophobia and astrophobia, both. (*Eleanor stares at him, delighted with the two new words.*)

MILDRED (*uncovering*): What's that?

ELEANOR: Phobia—astro means stars, I know. Mildred, you're seeing stars. What's the other one mean, Bill?

BILL: Ceraunophobia? That means fear of thunder.

ELEANOR: Then astrophobia is really fear of lightning? (*Bill nods.*)

LILLIAN: Well, then, I've got both phobias. I'd crawl under the table, right now, if I weren't ashamed of myself.

ELEANOR: You'd have lots of company. We'd all like to do the same only we aren't as honest as you are.

JACK: Is that so . . . (*He and the others are startled by a sudden noise on the porch. A gust of wind has snapped up the window shades. Girls squeal. Chester, startled, drops some of the money he is counting into the cigar box. Jack looks out of window as room becomes a bit brighter with the shades up.*)

CHESTER: Still jumpy. If there hadn't been a burglary last night, those shades snapping up like that wouldn't have disturbed us one bit.

ELEANOR: Then how about shutting the windows?

MILDRED: And pulling those shades down! Way down!

JACK (*to Chester*): Come on, we'll do just that. Then a burglar can creep up and we won't see him. . . .

MILDRED: Oooh, you. . . . (*Jack and Chester exit and are presently seen shutting windows and pulling down shades.*)

BILL (*calling*): Leave the middle window open and the shade up. I'm going to need it in a hurry.

JACK and CHESTER (*from porch*): O.K.

BILL (*excitedly*): Boy, what a chance! Those clouds are just full of electricity.

LILLIAN (*rising, adjusting her frock and sauntering toward Eleanor's chair*): Well, I'm glad that's all counted. I could

use some of that money for a lovely new gown to wear after the performance.

MILDRED: New gown? What for?

LILLIAN: Why, for the reception to the cast!

MILDRED: Oh, my goodness, nobody dresses up. It's just hamburgers and milk. Coffee for the proud parents.

ELEANOR: Say, Lill, if you'd been coming here every summer since you were in three-cornered pants the way we have, you wouldn't see any need for getting all dressed up.

MILDRED: Goodness, everybody knows everybody else, even the natives.

[Chester and Jack enter and move toward Bill to watch proceedings.]

BILL: Well, Lillian might want to dress up for me! (*Eleanor and Mildred laugh, chidingly.*)

MILDRED (*to Chester and Jack*): Lillian thinks we ought to dress for what she calls "the reception to the cast" after the show's over.

CHESTER and JACK: Well, why not?

JACK: It's an idea.

CHESTER: It would be a good thing. These brats wouldn't think of dressing up for anybody, and certainly not for us.

ELEANOR: Why for you, anyway? You wouldn't even notice the difference.

MILDRED: Nor appreciate it. Besides, where's the money coming from—certainly not out of my summer allowance!

LILLIAN: What about an advance on some of the ticket money we've already collected?

ELEANOR: At that, it might be better than letting it stand (*points to table*) around for a thief to get it.

JACK: Still harping on our ducats, like old Shylock.

ELEANOR: Well, what are you going to do with the money now it's all counted and a storm overhead?

CHESTER: Yes, it's too late to get it to the bank before it rains. We'll just have to wait until the storm is over.

BILL: You'd better wait. It'll rain any minute now, and when it does, it'll pour.

[Against the now drawn shades and the one open window on the porch outside, lightning flashes more frequently, followed by closer rumbles of thunder. Mildred drops to floor next to and in front of Eleanor, who sits near Bill winding the string on his stick. Mildred hides her face in Eleanor's skirt.]

ELEANOR: Goodness, you got miles and miles of string, Bill.

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BILL: That kite's going up thousands and thousands of feet, Elly. Boy! What lightning! What thunder!

LILLIAN: Well, at last, I'm beginning to understand. You're going to try that experiment Benjamin Franklin tried: the one with the kite and the key.

BILL: Right the first time!

LILLIAN: But that's a square kite.

BILL: That's only because the handkerchief is square.

LILLIAN: Did Franklin use a silk handkerchief?

BILL: Yup. In the rain, the kite will get wet and the silk won't tear apart up there in the sky the way paper would.

CHESTER: That's right. Paper wouldn't have a chance.

LILLIAN (*pointing to paper on tail she has picked up*): These bits of paper that Eleanor tied to the tail, Bill, what are they for?

BILL: I put them on to prove there's nitric acid in them than clouds.

ELEANOR: How can you prove that?

BILL: With the tail flying around up there near those electrified clouds, these bits of paper will be turned a dark red, and that's proof that the clouds contain nitric acid.

MILDRED (*interested beyond her fears, lifts her head*): What's nitric acid?

BILL (*at his best*): It's a corrosive liquid; used to dissolve metals, like that silver over there that you've been counting. (*nods head toward table down right. All nod their heads as though they really understood.*) And, as I said, those clouds are charged with electricity so that when these papers turn red it will be proof that there's nitric acid up there in those clouds . . . see?

JACK: But you won't know until you pull the kite in, will you?

BILL: No, but they'll be burned red just the same. (*To Eleanor.*) Here, brat, hold this, while I attach this wire. (*Hands Eleanor the kite, which she holds firmly while Bill attaches the copper wire to stick at the opposite end of which the tail floats.*)

ELEANOR: What's the wire for?

BILL: That's to strike into the clouds to draw out the electricity.

CHESTER: To strike into the clouds? Lightning strikes from the clouds.

BILL: No, it doesn't, at least, not until an object from the earth first strikes into the electric laden clouds does the lightning occur. This wire will draw the fire from out of the cloud.

CHESTER: It's beyond me. You talk about electrified and electric-laden clouds. How do you know they are electric-laden?

BILL: Well, of course, it's easy to tell these are electric-laden clouds because there's been lightning and thunder. But rain clouds become electric-laden by the coalescence of drops of water—which is really the rain—in them.

ELEANOR: Then there must be millions of drops of water.

BILL: There are, and as I said, it's by what we meteorologists call the coalescence of droplets that the clouds become highly charged with electricity. (*At the words they all nod learnedly—and Eleanor is silently trying them over on her tongue.*) You see, one large drop of water has less of a superficial area than a million drops of water taken together. See?

ELEANOR: You sound just like the encyclopedia. A large drop (*slowly and analytically*) versus all the little drops. (*Jumps up and down on her chair.*) I get it! Of course! (*Gesticulates with her hands, rounded, to show many small drops and then one large drop as comparison.*) Each droplet has an outside surface and a lot of outside surfaces all together would make more surface than just one big drop would make. Is that it? (*Bill nods in approval; the others look at her skeptically and in wonder.*)

LILLIAN (*thoughtfully*): That sounds logical. (*Each in turn shapes his hands to illustrate the large and small drops of water, to experience for himself.*)

CHESTER: Are the drops electrified?

BILL: They become electrified when two clouds full of them float near each other or when some object from the earth, like the wire, gets near the cloud to draw the electricity from it.

CHESTER: Then there is a flash of lightning (*Bill nods.*) and I always thought it was the other way 'round.

BILL: People used to think that lightning strikes the earth, but Franklin proved that it didn't; that unless some object attracted the fire from the cloud there would be no flash and consequently no explosion which is the thunder.

ELEANOR (*restraining her excitement*): Then what happens when this wire draws out the electricity? Does it burn?

BILL: No, the electricity will run down the wire, through the wet silk—water is a conductor you know. . . .

ALL: That's so.

BILL (*demonstrating*): . . . down through the string here to the key.

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ELEANOR: But what about that silk ribbon tied to the key?

BILL: That's to prevent me from getting a shock. I have to hold on to this silk ribbon while the kite is up there in the rain and wind.

ELEANOR (*elbows on knees, head on fists*): Uh-huh, else you'd get a knock-out shock.

BILL (*nodding*): And how! This big key here, however, will break the circuit. It is dangerous to touch it but you can put your knuckles near it like this (*demonstrates*) and you'll see sparks.

ALL: Oh, can we try? (*Bill nods.*)

BILL: And these filaments (*roughing the string between kite and key*) will stand out straight because they have been electrified. If you move your finger up and down near it, they will wave back and forth. You wait and see.

MILDRED: But won't the ribbon get wet, too? And if water is a conductor, you'll be knocked out, won't you?

BILL: Say, I'm going to stand way inside the window so the ribbon won't get wet, otherwise I *will* get knocked out. And listen, one of you will have to see that the string doesn't touch the window frame or there'll be a fire—and I mean fire!

ELEANOR: You mean a congregation. . . .

MILDRED: Conflagration. . . .

ELEANOR: Well, anyway, it sounds exciting. When do you begin, Bill?

BILL: I ought to be out there right now, getting this kite up before it rains too hard. But nothing will happen until the cloud is exactly over the kite and that's any minute now.

[*Throughout the foregoing, there have been intermittent flashes of lightning followed by thunder, always closer, and at lesser intervals.*

ELEANOR: Oooh, then let's hurry.

[All rise quickly. Eleanor's chair falls over backward and Mildred hastily picks it up and pushes it toward desk. They hurry out, all except Lillian. Bill is last, but he does not observe that Lillian has moved toward table. Bill holds his kite high, holding up the tail carefully. After all are out, Lillian is already at table, obscuring objects on it from the audience. She bends over table as though in search of something. Her actions must give the audience the impression that she might be taking some of the money. She remains standing there until lights go out. She is

in reality looking for her handkerchief which she thought she left on the table. At that moment, Eleanor passes outside of living room window and sees her.

ELEANOR (*poking her head inside living room window*): Lillian, come on out, you're missing it.

LILLIAN (*looking up*): In a moment.

[Eleanor watches for a second, then turns back to the others. There is a flash of lightning and a terrific crash of thunder. The girls scream and Lillian jumps. At that moment the living room lights go out and stage is completely dark. Lillian gropes her way to the settee, fumbles for her bag, finds it, opens it, removes a handkerchief, closes bag with a loud snap and puts it back on settee, from which it drops to floor. Lillian does not hear it for she is moving toward door as another flash of lightning followed by a quick crash of thunder startles her. She goes out and the door slams behind her. While Lillian's action goes on inside, the others, outside, on porch, crowd around Bill who has sent his kite up just in time. The actual flying of the kite is obscured from the audience but words and action give the audience a clear idea of what is going on.]

MILDRED (*outside*): Ooh, look! The string!

BILL (*outside*): Run your finger up and down!

CHESTER (*outside*): O.K. Look! Those filaments are standing right out!

ELEANOR (*outside*): Let me try.

LILLIAN (*outside*): Me, too.

JACK (*outside*): Look! The key! Watch me! I put my knuckles near the key. See the sparks?

MILDRED: Let me try.

[A lesser flash of lightning and a rumble of thunder.]

BILL (*outside*): Time to draw in the kite.

CHESTER (*outside*): Whew, what a wind! We'll never get that kite down.

BILL: Sure! Come on, help me.

[As they crowd around Bill tugging at the string, the curtain descends for a moment.]

When the curtain rises again, down stage is still dark. The cigar box on the table is shattered; the silver money has disappeared; the bills and newspapers and magazines are scattered all over the floor in front of fire place. Lillian's bag has been pushed behind settee where no one can see it, and another, with metal frame twisted, is substituted. Coin purse inside is torn to

shreds and rim also twisted and all the coins gone. Lillian pulled a black cloth over the silver money when she stood with back to the audience looking for her handkerchief. The cloth might be placed between two magazines. The dialogue outside must be swift and excited to draw the attention of the audience away from Lillian.

[Outside all are hopping about pulling in the kite. It is wet and dirty and the papers on the tail are a dark red at the edges. There should be two kites—the one Bill makes and one already made, soiled and wet, with the papers tied to kite, red at the edges.

CHESTER (outside): Look! Those pieces of paper.

JACK (outside): They turned all right.

ELEANOR (outside): Dark red, just as you said, Bill.

MILDRED (outside): It's a rhyme! Take a wish or it will be bad luck.

ELEANOR (outside): I don't know what to wish. I'm too excited.

BILL (outside): Wish that nothing happens to this kite.

ELEANOR (outside, as one last tug brings kite safely inside window on porch): You get your wish, Bill.

BILL (outside, drawing in his kite and backing away from window): You can shut the window now. Storm's over, but it will rain for a while yet.

[Chester, outside, shuts porch window and pulls the shade the length of the other shades—half way down the window. All outside move toward door back left, chattering excitedly. Door back left opens. A shaft of light brightens, for a moment, the still darkened stage.

ELEANOR (at entrance): Gee, Bill, that was more exciting than a gangster movie.

JACK (entering): Say, who switched off the lights? (Goes toward table to switch on lamp; changes his mind as Lillian speaks.)

LILLIAN: Did you get a shock, Bill? (All stand at threshhold, some in and some just outside of door, talking.)

BILL: Nope. We kept that silk ribbon inside all right, and it didn't get wet.

CHESTER (at light switch): Something's wrong with the lights.

[All look up and enter slowly, more or less escorting Bill who holds wet kite high; Eleanor and Mildred keeping tail off the floor.

BILL (moving to his desk down right): Short circuit, probably. (Bill reaches his desk.) Sometimes happens in an electric

storm like this one. (*There is sufficient light from the open door and porch to brighten stage at left. The table and fireplace are however in greater obscurity.*)

CHESTER: I'll have to put in a new fuse. Come on, Jack; let's go down the cellar. We'll have time now to check the money and get it to the bank. (*Chester and Jack exit.*)

BILL (*at desk, places his kite against side of desk*): I better write down my observations while they are still fresh in my mind.

LILLIAN (*at desk with Eleanor and Mildred*): That was a most interesting exhibition of natural phenomena. (*Eleanor pantomimes large word.*)

MILDRED (*still excited*): Wasn't it though? (*They are wrapt in wonder at what they have just experienced. Eleanor bends over kite.*)

ELEANOR: The silk is soaking wet and dirty.

LILLIAN: And those papers on the tail. What did you say turned them red, Bill?

BILL (*busy at his desk, getting out writing paper, pen or pencil and so on*): The nitric acid in the clouds. (*Moves toward door.*) I'm going to my room to write down my stuff. I'll let you read it.

GIRLS: Oh, yes. (*Bill exits just as living room lights come up.*)

ELEANOR (*who has now moved toward table down right*): Well, I'll be an aunt's monkey! (*Stops dead, looking at table—Mildred who is just behind, collides with her.*)

MILDRED: Ouch! You mean a monkey's aunt . . . (*Sees debris.*) EEEeeeeeee! The thief! (*Screeches.*) He's been here!

LILLIAN: Oh! (*puts both hands to her face as she stands stock still looking at the condition of the floor near the table.*) The money! Look, it's gone!

CHESTER (*entering followed by Jack*): What's gone?

MILDRED (*who has moved around table toward fireplace*): No, it isn't. Look, the bills are scattered all over the floor, and the newspapers and magazines. . . .

LILLIAN: But the silver! It was on the table when we went out and it isn't there now!

JACK (*who has come swiftly to table with Chester*): The cigar box! It's broken to pieces.

ELEANOR: Gee, he must have been mad.

MILDRED: There's no silver on the floor. (*On her knees on floor.*)

CHESTER (*quickly*): Don't touch anything, Mildred.

MILDRED (*rising slowly and looking at others who stand there more or less shocked and horrified*): That's right.

LILLIAN: That means only one thing, then, doesn't it?

ALL: Yes.

JACK (*quietly*): Somebody got in here while we were outside.

[Mildred huddles up against Eleanor who seems to be stricken dumb, as she stares at the debris.]

CHESTER: It must have been the same person who robbed the Hollisters'.

MILDRED: That's right. Their living room was in a mess, just like this, and only the silver and jewelry were taken.

LILLIAN (*one hand to a cheek*): Goodness, Chester, Jack. You just came up from the cellar. Didn't you hear 'or see anything strange while you were down there?

[Eleanor's glance now rests on Lillian whose every movement she now watches as she listens.]

JACK: No. But even so, if there were some one down there, he'd keep quiet until we came up again.

[Chester moves from behind table toward telephone.]

MILDRED: Maybe we better call the sheriff.

CHESTER (*at 'phone*): Phone's dead. (*They stare at one another, thoroughly alarmed now.*)

JACK (*looking about him, pantomiming*): Well, whoever it was, he couldn't have come in through the front door for we would have seen him. He couldn't have climbed in the window because we were all on the porch outside. So . . . o. . . .

CHESTER: He could only have come in through either of those doors. (*points to door up right and up left.*) That door (*points to door up right*) leads to the kitchen, and the back-yard (*turns*) and that (*points to door up left*) leads upstairs and down the cellar.

LILLIAN: But who could have got in? We were here most of the morning. Surely we would have heard or seen something or someone.

MILDRED: Not with all that thunder and excitement. Anybody could have come in and gone out again without our hearing him.

JACK: All the doors locked?

CHESTER: I believe so.

JACK: What about the windows?

CHESTER: I don't know if they were all locked but they were all shut. In the kitchen at least when I had breakfast in there.

JACK: Well, let's go see. We'll take the kitchen first and then the bedrooms.

MILDRED (*frightened*): Let's all go together. I'm scared.

ELEANOR: What of?

MILDRED: Suppose we *do* find somebody, in a closet or under a bed? He's sure to have a gun.

LILLIAN (*suddenly*): Bill! He went upstairs to his room while you were in the cellar. (*All turn toward door up left as Chester goes to it.*)

MILDRED: It's awful quiet up there. . . . (*Girls crowd together.*)

CHESTER (*opens door and calls*): Bill, oh, Bill!

BILL (*from upstairs*): What do you want?

[*All breathe a sigh of relief.*]

CHESTER: You all right up there?

BILL (*upstairs*): Of course, I'm all right. Why shouldn't I be?

CHESTER: Well, come on down, something's happened.

BILL (*upstairs*): What did you say? Something's . . . hap . . . I'll be right down.

[*From upstairs is heard sound of chair scraping on floor, followed by a sound of footsteps clattering down the stairs while others continue to talk.*]

JACK: I wonder if there'll be any finger prints.

LILLIAN: Certainly. Our fingerprints must be scattered all over the place.

MILDRED: That's so.

CHESTER: There ought to be footprints, though, coming to the house.

JACK: Not if he got here before it began to rain; or even after. They'd all be washed away by now anyway.

[*Eleanor is singularly quiet, merely standing still and contemplating the scene. Mildred, bewildered at Eleanor's silence, has unwound herself and stands apart, now studying Eleanor, now observing the others.*]

CHESTER: Then he's still in the house.

[*Mildred goes toward settee in search of her slicker.*]

MILDRED: I'm going home. I'm too scared.

LILLIAN: Don't, Mildred! We're all scared.

MILDRED: But if there are no footprints and no anything, then he's still in the house.

[*Bill, in haste to find out just what has happened cannot get*

the door open quickly enough from inside. His rattling of the knob adds to the alarm of the others.

MILDRED: There! He's behind that door. Heavens! (She runs to Eleanor.)

ELEANOR (holding tightly to Mildred's hand): It's only Bill.

BILL (enters): What's the matter? Why did you scream like that, Mildred?

CHESTER: Come here, Bill.

[Bill goes to table, then around to fireplace; sees paper money and magazines scattered on floor; then cigar box; gives a long whistle of amazement.]

BILL: Well, what do you think of that! He's done it again.

That's what Mildred said the Hollisters' living room looked like—everything scattered. Then he didn't get away last night. (Bill examines everything curiously.)

JACK: Careful, Bill, don't touch anything.

BILL (on hands and knees): He didn't take the bills (looks up at table) . . . and the silver? (Looks inquiringly at others.)

CHESTER: Gone!

BILL (gives another whistle): Did you call the sheriff?

CHESTER: 'Phone's dead.

JACK: Do you suppose whoever it was got in right after your mother and dad left this morning?

CHESTER: Perhaps. We weren't up yet when they left.

MILDRED: Then he was here all morning and heard everything we said.

JACK: Well, there ought to be *something* . . . some clue . . . even the perfect crime has been discovered by just one little thing overlooked.

[Bill like Eleanor is silent, contemplating and studying the scene.]

LILLIAN: What about footprints going away from the house?

JACK (looking out of window): The rain's stopped. And mud would leave prints, you know.

MILDRED: But what if he's still in the house?

CHESTER: That's right. If we all go out looking for footprints that may not be there, he will have a chance to get away.

JACK (snapping his fingers): I have it! Let's re-enact the scene first.

ELEANOR (galvanized): Re-enact the scene! You know what that implies, don't you? (All stare at her.) It means one of us took the money, dumbbell. And how could we when we were all outside except . . . (at which word, Eleanor realizes that

they were not all outside together at the same time, but that Lillian had remained behind for a few minutes. All stare at Eleanor.)

JACK: One of us was the last one out. You, Bill.

BILL: What would I want with your money? I had my hands full of kite.

JACK: That isn't what I mean, Bill. Didn't you hear anything?

BILL: Nope. I wonder. . . . (*He is silent.*)

CHESTER: But you were the last one out, weren't you, Bill?

BILL: I guess maybe I was but I didn't hear a thing nor see anyone.

ELEANOR (*looks at Lillian and waits for her to speak*): Bill (*as Lillian does not speak*) wasn't the last one out.

ALL (*except Bill*): What do you mean?

ELEANOR: Lillian was! Didn't you see or hear anybody, Lillian?

I thought . . . I thought . . . I saw you at the table. . . .

[*There is a dead silence as all stare at Lillian; and Lillian and Eleanor stare at each other. Eleanor is nearly heart-broken at the result of her explosiveness.*]

LILLIAN: Why, Eleanor, you don't think I took all that heavy silver. . . .

ELEANOR: Oh, Lillian, no, I don't, but . . . (*she is horrified at her own thoughts*) you were . . . I stuck my head in the window . . . and you, oh, Lillian, what did you do . . . (*bursts into sobs, covering her face with her hands.*)

MILDRED (*going quickly to Eleanor and putting her arms about her*): Hush, Elly. Elly, hush.

[*All are stunned. They avoid looking at Lillian. Bill observes Lillian somewhat closely, then becomes absorbed in examining the floor around the fireplace, while listening to the others.*]

CHESTER: All right, Elly. You stuck your head in the window.

Did you see anything?

LILLIAN (*quickly*): Yes, she saw me. (*Lillian turns, and moves toward table.*) After you had all gone out I came back to the table in search of my handkerchief. It wasn't on the table, so I went to get one from my bag. Some of the stacks of money fell over, and I straightened them . . . that's when Eleanor looked in. (*Lillian looks from one to the other.*)

MILDRED: But now the silver's gone.

CHESTER

JACK } : Mildred! ! !

ELEANOR }

LILLIAN: I know it looks suspicious, what with my saying I

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could use some of the money for a new dress. Also, I'm a stranger here. You don't know anything about me but what I've told you (*close to tears, she fumbles for her handkerchief*) but . . . but . . . I didn't take the money.

CHESTER: Of course you didn't.

ELEANOR: Oh, I didn't say Lillian took it. What I meant was . . . it was just that I saw her at the table while we were outside, and well, everything came tumbling out of my mouth . . . and I thought maybe she saw or heard somebody or something . . . well, anyway, she's innocent until proved guilty . . . or is it the other way 'round? Mildred, help me out. (*All begin to laugh.*) Maybe now I'll learn not to be so hasty. (*Mildred pats Eleanor, then sees Bill who appears to be half way up the chimney.*)

MILDRED: Look at Bill! I'll bet he thinks the thief or the money or both are up there.

BILL: It's entirely possible.

[*All turn to look at him, glad of the respite from their suspicions of Lillian.*]

CHESTER (*joins Bill followed by Jack. They look up chimney*): It's possible but there's nobody up there.

BILL: No, there's nobody up there . . . now!

JACK: Now?

CHESTER: What do you mean by now?

BILL (*still at chimney*): What I said! There's nobody up there now.

MILDRED: Then you mean somebody *was* up there?

CHESTER (*to Bill*): Say! I wouldn't wonder if *you* took the silver after all and hid it up the chimney, as a joke.

BILL: Say, I had too many other things on my mind although the money may be hidden up there.

ELEANOR: You mean somebody might have come down the chimney, taken all the silver and climbed back up there again?

CHESTER: Calm down, Eleanor. Bill's playing a joke on us.

BILL: A joke! Would I have shattered the cigar box? Or strewn the bills all around on the floor, and the magazines and papers?

JACK: Maybe not. Nevertheless, the silver money is gone and where did it go to if nobody took it?

BILL: That's what I'd like to know! It's still in this house, or must be.

CHESTER and JACK (*exasperated*): Then tell us . . . (*Bill stares absent-mindedly at the chimney.*)

ELEANOR (*suddenly*): Bill, come out of your scientist's heaven, and down to earth. I have virtually accused Lillian here of taking that silver. If you know who took it, for heaven's sake tell us. Do you or don't you?

BILL: Do I or don't I what?

ELEANOR (*impatiently now*): Do you know who the thief is?

BILL: Oh, the thief! Sure, I know. (*Bill looks significantly from one to the other.*)

ALL: Well, then, who. . . . (*They close about him.*)

BILL: Lillian was luckier than she knows. She might have been struck. . . .

MILDRED (*screaming*): What do you mean? Then there was a thief in here?

BILL: There was a thief in here. (*Bill takes his stand before the downstage end of the table, hands in pockets, feet apart. He is having a thoroughly good scientific time of mystifying them.*) Yes, there was a thief in here, and a very cunning thief, more cunning than any human being could be . . . A mysterious thief. . . .

LILLIAN: Human being!

ELEANOR (*cheering up*): Bill, don't keep us in suspense.

LILLIAN: I'm guilty, you know, until proved innocent.

BILL: Well, I'll explain to you this heavenly mystery. Eleanor did get it straightened out just now . . . (*Bill looks tantalizingly at Eleanor; winks at her and Eleanor looks expectantly at Bill.*)

ELEANOR (*suddenly*): Oooooh! I know! That (*mispronouncing*) metrolgist business. I'll bet the house was struck by that first flash of lightning.

CHESTER: What's that got to do with the disappearance of the money?

JACK: Don't be a sap, Eleanor.

BILL: She isn't a sap. That quick mind of hers is working on all cylinders. That's exactly what happened. The house was struck by lightning.

CHESTER: What of it? How does that account for the theft of only the silver coins and not the bills?

BILL: It accounts for it perfectly. That's just what lightning would do.

ELEANOR (*explosively*): Nitric acid!

LILLIAN: Of course!

JACK: Say, what is this, a mad house?

ELEANOR (*excitedly*): No! No! Don't you remember, Jack?

Bill said nitric acid does something to metals. What was it, Bill? It pollutes the metals or something—and those silver coins were metal. . . .

BILL (*shaking his head tolerantly at Eleanor*): Why so excited, Elly? Nitric acid *dissolves*, not pollutes. . . .

ELEANOR: One and the same thing. You pointed to the silver when you were explaining it. But what happens when metal is polluted? I mean dissolved.

MILDRED: Well, if that's what happened, then Lillian didn't take the money.

BILL: Of course she didn't and you ought to apologize.

LILLIAN: Oh, that's all right. I know you *knew* I didn't really take it, but it did look bad for me. (*They sigh with relief and move toward Lillian smiling sheepishly.*)

ELEANOR (*going to Lillian*): Lillian, I'm sorry you're proved innocent; (*Lillian laughs and hugs Eleanor.*)

MILDRED: You mean not guilty—gracious, no, you mean you're glad she's not guilty. Oh, my, now I'm all twisted too.

LILLIAN (*encircling Mildred with her other arm*): What a sister act! But, Billy, where's the money?

ALL: Yes, where's the money?

BILL: That's what I'm trying to puzzle out.

ELEANOR: But that's easy. It's all dissolved . . . Bill, you don't mean dissolve after all, you mean liquefy. . . .

BILL: That's the word, Elly. (*Snaps his fingers.*) I knew I didn't have it right. . . .

ELEANOR: Then if the silver is liquefied it must have run together in the, ahem, molten state and then as it cools, it hardens. Isn't that it Bill?

BILL: Yes, and that's why it must still be somewhere in the house. . . .

MILDRED: I'm going nuts! (*She fans herself as if faint.*)

ELEANOR: Give Bill a chance to tell us. We keep interrupting him too much. If all those silver dollars and half dollars and quarters and dimes are liquefied, then they must have run together as molten silver . . . and where did they run to?

BILL: I don't know, except that . . . except that lightning is pretty tricky and might do anything. You remember, there were two flashes in quick succession?

ALL: Yes.

BILL: I thought it was funny that nothing happened to the string and the key after that first flash because I was sure that cloud was right over the wire.

ALL: Well?

BILL: That first flash struck the house.

CHESTER: But where did it strike?

BILL: It came down the chimney—it's brick—that's why it did not set the house afire. (*Turns to chimney to demonstrate.*) The lightning was attracted by the metal. It came down the chimney, gathered up all those stacks of coins and melted them together; broke the cigar box and melted the coins that were in it; then it scattered the papers all over the floor and dashed off somewhere . . . but I can't see where . . . (*Bill moves toward telephone table, searching*) lightning can play the queerest tricks—unbelievable, really . . . (*moves downstage; others also search; Bill sees Lillian's bag on floor. Stoops.*) Ah! Whose is this?

LILLIAN: Mine! But what happened to it! It's all torn. Did the lightning strike that too?

BILL: The metal frame is all twisted—that's what attracted the lightning. (*Extends bag to Lillian; coin purse drops out which Bill catches.*) Aha! The lightning bent the frame on your coin purse, too, and . . . (*looks inquiringly at Lillian*) Have any silver in it?

LILLIAN (*clustering with others about Bill who still holds bag*): I had a quarter and some dimes in that purse!

MILDRED (*inspecting bag*): Then the thief got your money too! (*Shakes her head in wonder.*) The thief! The mysterious thief from heaven!

CHESTER: And lightning can't be traced by a serial number!

[*Chester laughs; then he and Jack gather up magazines from floor, and dollar bills; straighten objects on table, arrange the paper money and put it in their pockets with penciled memo as to quantity while they keep searching for the silver and listening to Bill.*

BILL: No, but it scattered those bills and papers all over the floor.

JACK: And we still don't know what became of the silver. If it was melted where is it?

BILL: It must have been melted together into a lump. That's what lightning would do—pollute it—as Eleanor said, and run it together.

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LILLIAN: But what happens then? Could the lightning carry off a lump of heavy silver?

BILL: No, lightning doesn't carry anything off. It would have dropped it somewhere . . . but where? (*Bill has been gazing thoughtfully about him but is puzzled.*)

ELEANOR (*quickly*): The bell!

MILDRED (*startled*): I didn't hear it ring.

BILL (*snapping his fingers and quickly grabbing a chair, dashes to door*): That's it! (*He is about to climb on chair.*) It's gone! (*He puts chair aside and searches on floor. All get down on hands and knees; bump into one another—and then, as Bill gropes under table or other piece of furniture and withdraws his hand, holding a lump of silver.*) The bell! And here are all your precious silver coins melted around it. (*All rise and surround Bill who is holding an irregular lump of metal.*) Have a look!

ALL: What do you think of that! (*They all examine the lump curiously.*)

ELEANOR: How did it happen, Bill?

BILL: I don't suppose anybody ever knows exactly, but the lightning could have come down the chimney, as I said; gathered up the silver stacks on the table; shattered your cigar box to get at what silver was in there. Then it dashed off the table and in its speed the liquefied metal went along with it to Lillian's bag, twisted the two frames to get the metal out of them, and the coins in the purse and then flew madly up to the bell—more metal—and the lump by now beginning to harden, dropped to the floor and rolled under the table. And the lightning probably flew out of the hole where the wire comes in and then out through a similar hole in the porch door.

CHESTER: So there was never a thief—nothing really mysterious!

BILL (*thoughtfully*): No, not even at the Hollisters', because that's what must have happened there. I would say, or was it Mildred who said it: it was a Heavenly Mystery. (*Turns to Mildred and Eleanor.*) Didn't they find a lump of silver?

MILDRED: Not while we were there!

ELEANOR: They didn't say anything to us—but we wouldn't have understood it anyway.

JACK: But what are we going to do with a *lump* of silver? We can't deposit it; we can't cash it . . .

BILL: Sure you can cash it. At the assay office in town.

ELEANOR: That's right, you can.

MILDRED (*excitedly*): Well, let's go to the Hollisters' or to the sheriff's so we can get our money back. (*Laughter. Eleanor and Mildred dash for their slicker, Lillian her coat.*)

CHESTER: Well, we can deposit the currency anyway.

JACK: The sheriff will want to keep our lump of silver for evidence.

BILL: Against whom? They've probably found the lump at the Hollisters' by now. (*All but Bill move toward door.*) Well, I got to finish writing my observations; and, boy, what a story that will be!

ELEANOR: With a surprise ending, too. (*Lillian holds up her bag and surveys it mournfully.*)

LILLIAN: More mute, inglorious evidence!

ELEANOR (*suddenly*): Say, Bill, your observations can wait. You better come with us.

BILL: What for?

ELEANOR: How will the sheriff know that the Hollisters' lump of silver is all those loving cups and knives and forks and so forth and so on?

MILDRED: That's right.

ELEANOR: Besides, nobody will ever believe us. But if we have a what-you-muh-call him with us . . . a (*very carefully*) me-te-or-ol-o-gist—accent on the ol—it's O.K. . . . Right? (*Grins at Bill.*)

BILL (*as Eleanor puts her arm through his and pulls him toward door*): It'll pass. (*All exit, laughing, one after other.*) (*After CURTAIN has descended Eleanor and Bill come out front.*)

ELEANOR: We do not recommend that anybody try this experiment during a thunderstorm, do we, Bill.

BILL: No, siree. It might shock you to death!

EXIT



SNOWBOUND

BY EDWARD HERING

CHARACTERS

DOT
MARY
TED
CARNATION
PEGGY
JERRY
TOMMY
JANE
SPIKE
BUTCH

Time: The play will act forty minutes.

Place: Any deserted house.

COSTUMES

All the clothes are modern and are described in detail by the author.

PROPERTIES

Sofa covered with white slipcover. End table. Vase. A picture. A cloth over the picture. Three flashlights. Candle. Cigar and cane. Watch with heavy chain. Mousetrap.

LIGHTING

The lighting for this play has to be done with care. It is not difficult if you follow the directions of the author. The timing is of great importance.

NOTES

All of the characters, with the exception of Spike and Butch, are boys and girls of high school or junior high school age. They act naturally as normal young people would under the circumstances. They have, however, certain distinguishing characteristics.

Dot is a natural, likeable high school girl. She is understanding and sympathetic toward the others in her group and carries the lead in much of the conversation.

Mary is inclined to be somewhat shrewish and easily loses patience with the others. She demands to know the reason for everything they do.

Ted, the only boy in his group, is the leader of that group. He is the aggressive one of his group.

Carnation is a little colored girl, preferably smaller than the others. She wears a ski suit and a woolen, knitted hat. Her Negro dialect is noticeable, but not too heavy. (A dialect is of little use unless it can be understood.) When she gets excited, she is inclined to stutter slightly. She is frightened throughout the play, but she is definitely not the cringing type. She carries most of the comedy.

Peggy is a timid girl and is frightened by what is going on.

Jerry is the leader of his group and is the most aggressive of the boys and girls.

Tommy is younger than the others and is frightened by what is going on. The others criticize him frequently, and he is constantly on the defensive.

Jane is a tomboy and is ready and willing to meet anything that may come along.

Spike is a typical tramp, rough in clothing and in speech.

Butch is the educated type of tramp who speaks with a Harvard accent and carries everything off in a grand manner. His clothing is elegant, yet shabby. He tries to maintain a certain dignity which, in his circumstances, is ridiculous.

The howling of the wind can be produced by a wind machine (or by a clever boy or girl who can imitate the sound), or, what is simplest, by means of a record.

SETTING

The action takes place in a room of a deserted house. The time is supposed to be about midnight of a winter's night during a blizzard. The room is quite dark. There is a door left and one right. Each door leads to a different part of the house. Up center stands a sofa which is covered by a white slip cover. To the right of the sofa stands an end table. On the table is a vase. On the wall behind the sofa hangs a picture. A cloth is carelessly thrown over it to protect it from the dust.

THE PLAY

As the curtain rises, the stage is dark and deserted. Door right is shut. Door left is open.

From offstage right, can be heard the faint murmur of voices. This continues to grow louder. A beam of light shines through from under door right.

A GIRL'S VOICE (offstage): Ted, wait! Don't leave me out here!
ANOTHER GIRL: Don't go so fast!

[The door opens right and four figures appear in the door. They enter in the following order: Ted, Mary, Carnation, and Dot. The leader carries a flashlight which he flashes about the room.

TED (the leader): All right. I'm right here. I won't run away.
(He halts as the four people in the group get within the room. He turns to face the rest of the group, pointing his flashlight toward the others as he talks to them. All except Carnation wear overcoats.) Are we all together? Are you here, Dot?

DOT: Of course I'm here! You don't think I'd wait out there in the dark, do you?

MARY: What do we do now?

TED (moving to the center of the room, and followed closely by the others): Don't be impatient, Mary. We have to look around first.

MARY (flatly): Why?

TED: Why? What do you mean, "Why"?

[They are all huddled close together in the middle of the stage. Although they can be heard clearly, their voices are somewhat hushed.

MARY: Well, I don't like the idea of prowling around a deserted house at midnight. It's not my idea of a nice, quiet evening.

TED: It isn't midnight yet.

DOT: Well, it's almost.

MARY: This place gives me the creeps. I wish we hadn't come in.

TED (*angrily*): I suppose you'd rather stand outside in the snow with a blizzard raging. Why, you'd be frozen to death within half an hour the way that wind is blowing.

DOT: The wind is awfully strong.

MARY: I suppose you're right. Still, I don't like it.

TED (*impatiently*): Well, nobody *likes* it, as far as that goes. But we're stuck here and we'll just have to make the best of it. That's all.

DOT: How do you feel about it, Carnation? You haven't said a word.

[Ted points the light at the fourth member of the party. She is a little colored girl.]

CARNATION: Can't say nothin'.

MARY: Why not?

CARNATION: Gotta keep mah mouf shut t'keep mah teeth frum rattlin'.

TED: You're not afraid, are you?

CARNATION: Well, ah ain't 'xactly havin' fun.

DOT: Cheer up! This place isn't so bad.

CARNATION: Ah can think of a awful lot of other places ah druther be right now.

DOT: We're lucky to have this place, Carnation; to be in out of the storm.

CARNATION: Mebbe so. But this place too dark. Ah don't like darkness. It's bad for mah complexion.

MARY: We should never have gone to that basketball game on a night like this.

DOT: Especially out of town.

TED: Well, it's too late to worry about it, now. Besides, everything would have been all right if we hadn't got stuck in that drift.

MARY: Your poor father! I wonder if he's all right.

DOT: He should never have started to walk in to town.

TED: Oh, Dad will be all right. He's used to this sort of thing.

DOT: It was awfully nice of him to drive us to the game.

MARY: I wonder what became of Mr. Anderson's car. They left before we did.

DOT: I didn't see them at all.

TED: They probably got through. It was a heavier car than ours. They may have been able to plow through the drifts.

CARNATION: Ah's hungry.

DOT: Now that you mention it, I'm starved, too.

MARY: Walking through the snow works up an appetite, all right.

CARNATION: What Ah couldn't do to a couple of pork chops right now—smothered in onions!

DOT (*groaning*): Stop, Carnation!

TED: Hey! Cut it out!

[Both of the above speeches are delivered at the same time.]

MARY: We would have to be marooned three miles from the nearest delicatessen.

TED: We were lucky we could take refuge in this house, even though it is supposed to be haunted.

[Carnation jumps.]

CARNATION: Haunted! You mean ghosts?

TED: Yeah. Mystery! Spooks! You know—(*He waves his arms in imitation of a ghost, and begins to moan.*) Whoo! Whoo! (*He suddenly leans toward Carnation.*) Boo!

[Carnation squeals and jumps backward, falling into the sofa. There is a sound of the wind howling.]

DOT: Don't frighten Carnation like that. Besides, I don't think it's true about this house being haunted.

TED (*shrugging*): Well, that's what they say. I don't know.

MARY: Can't you think of anything more cheerful to talk about?

TED: Well, we can't talk about the weather. That certainly isn't cheerful.

[There is a pause during which the wind can be heard howling.]

TED: Listen to that wind howl!

CARNATION: Ah'm gettin' outa here.

DOT: But, Carnation, where can you go?

CARNATION: Outside.

TED: You can't go outside in this weather. You'll freeze.

CARNATION: Ah'm freezin' right now. Ah got cold shivers runnin' up an' down mah spine. They jumpin' from one vertebrate to another an' back agin.

TED (*firmlly*): You can't go out.

CARNATION: Ah'd just as soon freeze to death than get haunted to death by a mystery spook.

MARY: Oh, there's no spooks here.

DOT: Of course not. The house is empty. There's nothing here.

[From offstage comes a loud crash, followed by several lesser thuds. Then a groan is heard. The four people on stage stand perfectly still, staring at each other in terror.]

CARNATION (*the first to recover the power of speech*): That nothin' sure is makin' a awful lot of noise.

DOT (*weakly*): It's probably just a mouse—or something.

CARNATION: That mouse sure must be a powerful big animal.

TED: I wonder what it really was. We ought to investigate.

MARY: Hold on a minute! Where do you get that "we" stuff? Speak for yourself, John.

TED: All right. You stay here and *I'll* explore.

MARY: No, you don't. You're not going to leave us. We're going to stay together.

TED: Come on, then. Make up your mind.

[He crosses in front of others and goes to door right.]

CARNATION (*hopefully*): Is we leavin'?

DOT: No. We're going to see what made that noise.

CARNATION: Ah ain't curious. Ah don't wanna know what it is.

TED: There's something out there, and we have to find it. We don't want to act as if we were scared, do we?

CARNATION: Ah am scared.

TED: Well, if you want to stay here by yourself until we come back, you can.

CARNATION (*vigorously*): No suh! Not me! (*Ominously*) Mebbe *—*you won't come back.

MARY: I don't like the way you say that.

TED (*impatiently*): Ah! You're all acting like babies. Come on!

[They all walk toward door right.]

CARNATION (*bringing up the rear*): Why don't Ah stay home an' mind mah own business?

[All leave right.]

The stage is left deserted and in darkness. There is a brief pause. Lights can be seen through open door left. Enter Jerry, Jane, Peggy, and Tommy in the order mentioned. They are talking among themselves. Jerry and Tom are carrying flashlights.

PEGGY: Honestly, Tommy, you nearly scared me to death.

JERRY (*turning around and facing left*): You made enough noise to wake up the ghosts. What's the matter with you?

TOMMY: Can I help it if I fell down the stairs? It was dark.

[By this time they have reached the center of the stage. They are huddled closely together. From time to time their faces are lit up by the flashlights.]

PEGGY: Don't speak of ghosts. Tom's moaning sounded enough like ghosts to be the real thing.

JANE: Peggy's right. (*Turning to Tom.*) What were you moaning for?

TOMMY: Why pick on me? I hit my funny bone. And it wasn't funny.

JERRY (*to Jane*): Listen, Jane, let's look around this place and see what's what.

JANE: Good idea, Jerry. (*She grabs the flashlight from Tom.*) Here! Give me that flashlight.

[Jane and Jerry flash their lights around the room.]

PEGGY: Nothing seems to have been disturbed at all.

JANE: No. The mysterious visitors have left everything strictly alone.

TOMMY: Are there really spooks in this house?

JERRY: I don't know. Everybody always calls it the haunted house.

JANE: I wouldn't mind seeing a ghost or two before the night's over.

TOMMY: I would. I'd rather be home in bed.

[By this time they have finished exploring the room and have returned to center stage. They are standing in an uneven line, reading from right to left, as follows: Jane, Tommy, Peggy, and Jerry.]

PEGGY: I feel the same as you do, Tommy. I don't like this spooky place.

TOMMY: Well, I'm not scared. I'm just hungry.

[At this point, Tom starts to cross slowly left behind Peggy and Jerry. He wanders downstage and finally reaches down extreme left.]

PEGGY: Me, too. Jerry, how long does it take a person to starve to death?

JERRY: Don't talk about it. I'd almost forgotten how hungry I was, and now you have to bring the subject up again.

PEGGY: If only we hadn't got stuck in the snow drift.

JERRY: Well, you girls *wanted* to see the basketball game tonight.

JANE: The snow always drifts high out here on the meadows.

[*From down extreme left there is a sharp metallic snap, and Tommy lets out a scream.*

TOMMY: Ow! I've been shot!

[*Jane and Jerry play their lights upon him.*

PEGGY: Tommy, what's the matter?

JANE: Where are you?

JERRY: What is it?

[*The above three speeches are spoken simultaneously, during the confusion. The flashlights reveal Tom bent over and examining his right foot. Jerry goes forward and points his light at Tom's foot. Then he starts to laugh.*

JERRY: Ha! Ha! Tom's been shot—by a mouse trap.

[*The girls begin to laugh and walk closer to where Tommy is standing.*

JANE (stooping to examine the trap): There's even a piece of cheese in the trap.

[*Jerry stoops to examine the trap.*

PEGGY: All the comforts of home.

JERRY (tensely): Say!

TOMMY: What's the matter?

JERRY: I don't like this.

PEGGY: What is it?

[*Jerry rises, holding the piece of cheese in his right hand. He holds it up for them to see.*

JERRY: This cheese is fresh.

TOMMY: So what? Let the mice have fresh cheese, if they like it. We have no grudge against them.

JANE (impatiently): Listen, stupid! It means that that trap has been set just a little while ago.

PEGGY: But the house is supposed to be deserted.

JANE: Exactly.

TOMMY: Maybe the cheese just got soft because of the bad weather.

JERRY (turning to Tommy): Cheese gets hard with age—not soft.

TOMMY (sniffing at the cheese): It smells fresh. Maybe the house is haunted.

JANE: I never knew that ghosts went around setting mouse traps.

JERRY: Well, *somebody* set that trap—and just recently, too.

JANE: That's true. (*Melodramatically.*) They may still be here. They may be right here in the house with us now—watching our every move.

JERRY: That's right.

PEGGY (*shuddering*): You do say the nicest things!

[*Lights go on in the room. One of the girls screams, and those on stage stand blinking at each other. The flashlights burn feebly and unnoticed.*

TOMMY: Who put those lights on?

JANE: The little man that wasn't there, maybe.

JERRY: Somebody is very much there, I'm afraid. Lights don't just go on and off by themselves.

[*The group scatters, each person prowling around in order to examine the room better in the light. Jane reaches the sofa and sits upon it. She sets her flashlight, still burning on the sofa, with the beam of light pointing out toward the audience.*

PEGGY: I thought the electricity had been disconnected long ago, since nobody lived here.

JERRY: So did I.

TOMMY: What are we going to do?

JERRY: Find out who turned those lights on.

PEGGY (*pleading*): Oh, no!

JANE: Jerry's right. If I'm going to have to spend the night in this place, I'd like to know who my neighbors are. I don't like the idea of staying here and not knowing who is in the next room.

PEGGY: Oh, Jane, you make it sound perfectly dreadful.

TOMMY: I don't like it, either.

JERRY: Well, whether you like it or not, we're going to find out what's what. Come on!

[*Jerry turns and walks toward door left. Jane and Peggy start to follow him.*

JANE (*going left, and talking over her shoulder to Tommy, who is prowling around the right side of the stage and who is unaware that the rest of the group are leaving*): Try not to step into any more mouse traps this time.

[*Jerry, Peggy, and Jane exit left. They are almost out the door before Tom turns and realizes that they are gone.*

TOMMY (*running left after them*): Hey! Wait for me!

[*Exit left. One of the flashlights is left burning unnoticed on the sofa. The group can be heard faintly offstage left, going to*

another part of the house. The stage is deserted. Suddenly the lights go out. The flashlight once more burns brightly on the sofa. Footsteps and voices are heard, right.

DOT'S VOICE (offstage): I'm sure I heard voices.

TED'S VOICE (also offstage): So did I.

[Enter Ted, Carnation and Dot, right, in that order. Ted carries a lighted flashlight. Ted goes up, right of center. Carnation and Dot remain extreme right.

DOT: I guess it's just another false alarm.

TED: Looks like it. We certainly didn't find a thing anywhere in this old barn.

[Carnation squeals.

DOT: Carnation! What's the matter?

CARNATION: Ted, how many flashlights is you holdin' in yo' han's?

TED: One, of course. Why?

CARNATION: Well, don't look now, but—it's twins.

[Dot screams.

DOT: Look, Ted! There's another light in the room

[Ted walks right.

TED (in a hoarse whisper): Shh! There must be somebody else in the room. We'll have to try to get him before he gets us.

CARNATION (down extreme right. Moaning): Oh, Lawdy! Have mercy on a sinner. Honest! Ah know's Ah's a sinner.

TED (still whispering): Stop that jabbering, or you'll be a dead sinner!

DOT (also whispering): What are we going to do?

TED: We're going to sneak up on whoever's holding that light. Now, let's separate.

CARNATION: Me, Ah don't wanna separate!

TED: Do as you're told.

CARNATION: Ah'll prob'lly find mahself murdered in a pool of blood.

[Ted puts his light out. The figures separate and move across the room toward the left. Ted passes behind the sofa and Carnation passes before it. There is a moment's silence and then a vigorous scuffle left of sofa.

TED (shouting): I've got him.

CARNATION: Stop twistin' mah laig! Ah's murdered!

TED (in disgust): Carnation! Is that you?

CARNATION: Ah don't know. You git up. If they's anything left on the flo', dat's me.

DOT (*coming left to center*): Didn't you get anybody?

TED: Only Carnation.

DOT: Look, the light hasn't moved!

TED: There mustn't be anybody holding it. (*He flashes his light on.*) I don't think there's anybody here.

[*Dot seizes the flashlight from the sofa. Ted rises. Between them, they make a thorough search of the room. Carnation remains lying on the floor, center.*]

DOT: Get up off the floor, Carnation. There's nobody here.

CARNATION (*trying to rise*): Ah bet both mah laigs is busted.

TED (*helping her up*): You're all right. I just used a football tackle on you, that's all.

DOT: Mary hasn't said a word. Mary, where are you? (*There is no answer.*) Ted, she's gone! Mary isn't here!

TED (*alarmed*): Mary!

CARNATION: The spooks got her. Ah's gwine be next! Ah knows it.

DOT: Hush!

TED (*calling*): Mary!

DOT: Listen!

[*Mary enters right, running and stumbling.*

TED: Mary, where were you?

MARY (*out of breath*): I got lost. I couldn't find you. I was almost frantic.

DOT: What did you do?

MARY: I went to the window. There was some light from the snow there. Then I heard your voices.

DOT (*sympathetically*): You poor dear!

MARY: Do you know what I saw out there?

CHORUS: What?

MARY: Footprints!

DOT: Where?

MARY: Outside. In the snow.

TED (*laughing*): Of course. How do you suppose we got here—through the air?

DOT: They must have been our footprints.

MARY: But I thought we came in through the *front* door.

[*Dot sits on the sofa.*

TED: Sure. We did.

MARY (*leaning against the end table*): Well, these footprints came up to the *back* door.

TED (*excitedly*): Then there *must* be somebody else here.

Where there are footprints, there must be feet. And when there are feet, there are people attached to them.

MARY (*in mock admiration*): Remarkable! How do you do it?

TED: I guess I'm just a genius. That's all.

CARNATION: They's spooks in this place.

DOT: Don't be silly. Ghosts don't make footprints in the snow.

CARNATION: Well, *this* one did.

TED: I don't like the looks of this business. Let's get as close to the outside door as possible, in case we have to leave in a hurry.

CARNATION: That suits me fine.

TED: You girls stay by the door, and I'll come back here and keep watch to see if anybody comes.

[They turn and start toward door right in the following order: Mary, Carnation, Dot, and Ted. Carnation knocks a vase off the table and it falls to the floor with a crash.

CARNATION (*screaming*): He got me!

MARY: Who?

CARNATION: Ah don't know. We ain't been interduced yet.

DOT: You simply knocked a vase off the table.

TED: Come on. Let's get out of here before you knock over the piano and say it's an earthquake.

[Exit Right. Enter Jerry, Tommy, Peggy, and Jane, left, almost immediately. Jerry is carrying a flashlight. They speak in low voices.

JANE: I'm sure I heard a crash in here.

[They pause left of sofa.

PEGGY: There must be some one else in this house. Be careful, Jerry.

JERRY: If we only had the other flashlight. Don't you remember what you did with it, Tom?

TOMMY: Sure. I remember. I gave it to Jane.

JANE: I may have had it last. I don't remember. Anyhow, it's gone.

JERRY: That's a fine thing. Losing a flashlight at a time like this.

[Footsteps are heard.

TOMMY: What'll we do if we find somebody here?

JERRY: We'll all jump on him . . . Listen! Somebody's coming!

JANE: Put out the light!

[Jerry puts out his flashlight. Ted enters, right, carrying a flashlight. When he reaches center, the other four jump on him.

JERRY: Get him!

TED: Hey!

[They go down in a heap. Ted's flashlight falls to the floor and rolls a short distance from the scene of action.]

TOMMY: Get off my stomach!

[Enter Dot, Mary, and Carnation, right, in that order. They pause extreme right. Dot is carrying a flashlight.]

JANE: Grab his feet, Peggy!

[Dot, Mary, and Carnation approach center.]

PEGGY: Look out! There's more of them!

MARY: Ted! What's happened?

DOT: Are you all right?

TED (breathless): Sure. I'm having a wonderful time.

MARY (to Dot and Carnation): Let's help him.

[Dot puts her flashlight on the floor. The three of them are drawn into the struggle.]

TOM: Ow! Stop biting!

CARNATION: Well, get yo' foot off'n mah neck!

PEGGY: Stop! It's Carnation!

CARNATION: How come you know mah name?

DOT: It's Peggy and Jane!

CARNATION: Well, powder mah nose!

MARY: Ted, it's the gang!

TED (from beneath the pile): Well, tell them to get off me and I'll say hello.

[There are confused greetings and exclamations of surprise. They all get to their feet and stand in one group in the center of the stage. All three flashlights are now turned on.]

JERRY (to Ted and his group): What are you doing here?

DOT: We got stuck in the snow drift.

TOMMY: So did we.

TED: We must have been chasing each other around the house all night.

DOT: No wonder we heard noises all over the house.

PEGGY: That's right. We were frightening you, and you were frightening us.

DOT: And were we frightened!

MARY: Well, I'm glad that's over. My poor heart wouldn't have stood much more.

DOT: But what was that crash we heard?

MARY: And those moans?

JANE: Oh, that was Tommy.

DOT: What happened, Tom?

TOMMY (*stepping forward, glad to have the limelight*): Well, we were up on the second floor, see? And we were walking in the hall, and I took another step, and all of a sudden there wasn't any more second floor there.

MARY: What happened then?

TOMMY: Well, by that time, I was picking myself up off the first floor.

PEGGY: And he didn't come down the easy way, either.

DOT: Well, I sure am glad we found each other.

JANE (*disappointed*): And I'm not going to see a ghost after all.
[*Footsteps are heard.*

DOT: Shhh!

JERRY: What's the matter?

DOT: Listen!

[*There is silence as everybody listens to the footsteps.*

PEGGY: Footsteps!

TED: Somebody's coming.

CARNATION: What? Agin?

JERRY: Everybody hide!

[*They put out the three flashlights and hide behind the sofa. A flickering light shows through door right. Spike enters, right. He is all in white. He holds a candle out before him. He moves silently across the stage and goes out left. Slowly, one by one, the young people creep from their hiding places and crowd around the door left, peering after the figure.*

CARNATION (*at the rear of the group, standing on tip toes, trying to see over their shoulders*): That wuz a honest-to-goodness ghost!

PEGGY: It certainly looked like one.

CARNATION (*turning and walking right*): Ah'm leavin'. Now!

[*Ted and Jane leave the group and rush after her. They drag her back struggling.*

TED: Wait!

JANE: Where can you go?

CARNATION: That ain't important.

[*The lights go on. Everybody starts talking at once.*

PEGGY (*when the general hubbub has died down*): We'll all be nervous wrecks if this keeps up.

CARNATION: That ghost sure is after us, all right.

JERRY: I still don't think ghosts go around turning on lights and setting mouse traps.

CARNATION: He sure looked like a ghost to me.

PEGGY: Carnation's right. I think we ought to get out of here.

TED: All right. Let's go.

TOMMY: Listen! Shhh!

MARY: What now?

[Voices can be heard offstage.]

JERRY (turning to the others): He's coming back. Hide!

CARNATION: He sure is a busy ghost.

[They all hide behind the sofa. Carnation is the last one to try to hide behind the left side of the sofa. She gets her head behind it, but the rest of her sticks out like an ostrich.]

SPIKE'S VOICE (offstage): I tell ya, Butch, I heard voices.

BUTCH'S VOICE: Incredible!

SPIKE'S VOICE (insistent): I'm tellin' ya. I don't like it. This joint is haunted.

BUTCH'S VOICE: Nonsense.

[Enter Butch and Spike, left, in that order. They are two tramps. Butch is a picture of shabby elegance. He speaks with a Harvard accent, carries a cigar and a cane, and holds himself with dignity. Prominent among his garments are a pair of ragged spats, a large, flowing orange tie, and a light-colored vest. The vest is ornamented by a watch chain of formidable size but dubious value.]

Spike is a typical tramp, round and ragged and jovial. Prominent among his attire are a battered fedora and a dirty overcoat, both of which glisten with moisture, as if he had just been out in the snow.

Butch enters a little ahead and to the right of Spike, so that, in talking to Spike, his back is toward the sofa and Carnation.

BUTCH (continuing): My dear fellow, there's nothing to be afraid of. Only the ignorant believe in haunts. You've merely —*(He suddenly turns and sees Carnation protruding from behind the sofa.)* Look out!

[He jumps back in terror, his cigar flying up in the air and landing on the stage.]

SPIKE (seeing Carnation, too): What's this?

[Butch advances cautiously to the sofa and swats Carnation with his cane. She jumps up with a squeal. The rest of the boys and girls come out of hiding, much to the astonishment of the tramps.]

JERRY (to the two men): Who are you?

BUTCH (*recovering his dignity and stepping forward*): And who wants to know, may I ask?

SPIKE (*nodding*): Yeah. Who wants to know?

TED: Well, we got stuck in a snow drift.

MARY: And we came in here to get out of the storm.

PEGGY: That's why we're all here. We just have to wait until we can get back to town.

TOMMY: And who are you?

BUTCH: A fair question. Well, young man, my name is Reginald Witherspoon. My friends call me Butch. And this—(*He points to Spike.*) is my traveling companion, Spike.

SPIKE (*nodding to the group*): Hi.

[The young people gradually move left, closer to the two tramps, forming groups of two and three across the stage.]

BUTCH: Due to temporary financial difficulties, we are spending the winter season here in this house.

JERRY: Then that explains why the mouse trap was here.

SPIKE (*looking at the mouse trap on the floor*): Sure! Them mice been stealin' our food.

BUTCH: And so, you are welcome to stay with us until you can get back home.

TED: That's fine. Thank you.

CARNATION: Stay here? No, suh! Not me! Dey's a ghost here! Ah seen him.

SPIKE: A ghost! (*turning to Butch*) See? What did I tell you? I thought I heard noises!

BUTCH (*to Carnation*): What did your friend, the ghost, look like, my little Chickadee?

CARNATION (*indignantly*): He ain't no friend of mine. Ah don't go messin' around with no ghosts.

BUTCH: Well, what did he look like, anyhow?

CARNATION: It wuz white all over, an' it carried a candle, like this.

[She imitates the way the ghost walked, carrying the candle.]

MARY: That's right. It came through here just a few minutes ago.

SPIKE: That was no ghost. That was *me*!

BUTCH (*correcting him*): That was *I*.

SPIKE (*pointing to himself*): No. It was *me*.

BUTCH: I know it was you. But you should say, "It was *I*."

SPIKE (*exasperated*): How can it be *you*, if it was *me*? (*He turns*

to the boys and girls.) He's whacky! Anyhow, I was the ghost. I was carryin' the candle because the lights went out. So I went up on the roof to fix them.

BUTCH: That's right. The wind snapped the wires.

JANE: But the ghost was all in white.

SPIKE: I know. I was all covered with snow. I fell off the roof into a snow drift. It's all down me neck, too! (*He begins to squirm uncomfortably.*) Let's have some hot coffee.

BUTCH (*to the boys and girls*): Won't you come into the kitchen and have some? We also have bacon and eggs. The eggs we borrowed from a nearby farm, and I can recommend them very highly.

CARNATION (*to Dot*): Did you hear that? Bacon! . . . An' eggs!

PEGGY: That's the best news I've heard since the time school got closed on account of the measles.

DOT (*to Carnation*): Aren't you afraid you'll meet ghosts on your way to the kitchen?

CARNATION (*emphatically*): If Ah do, they better git out of mah way, 'cause bacon, here Ah come!

[*Exit left, Butch and Spike, followed by Carnation and the rest, all shouting enthusiastically.*

CURTAIN

MYSTERIOUS-YELLOW MOON CLEAR-SILVER MOON

By M. HUNTERTON

THOSE IN THE PLAY

PAT
EDDIE
MARGIE
GRACE
ADELAIDE
CHARLIE
ARTIE
MAJOR
MR. FOWLER

Time: The present.

Place: In New York State, Putnam County.

COSTUMES

The costumes are all modern.

PROPERTIES

The following properties are required: two rickety, old chairs. A shelf or two. Some old cups and saucers. A broken-down lantern. A large yellow moon. A large round cut-out of cardboard, painted yellow. Another larger round cut-out cardboard, a little smaller, painted silvery. A cow bell.

LIGHTING

The lighting must be done with care in this play. Be sure to make your lights change definitely when the silvery moon appears. At the beginning of the day have a yellowish blue light coming in through the door into the shack.

NOTES

The sounds of the birds and frogs can be imitated with bought whistles or by some boy or girl who is clever at whistling, or through records. The singing in the distance should consist of old songs. It must be timed in volume and type to the action of the play. The "bellowing" can be imitated or found in a record.

SETTING and THE PLAY

When the curtain opens you see the inside of a creaky, dismal wooden shack near Mahopac, New York. The boards are grey and black from the beating of wind and weather. Some of them hang loosely and some are half eaten away by rain and rot. It has an opening that is meant to be a door and next to it another about half way down the ceiling which is supposed to be a window.

The room is bare save for two weather-beaten rickety chairs and a table. Against the wall to the right are a few wooden shelves and on them some broken cups and plates and a broken down lantern.

It is the dreamy twilight hour of a summer's day when the bullfrogs just begin their night chunking and the peepers and katydids their evening songs. Now and then there is the cry of bobwhites and whippoorwills. You can see through the door and window the blue darkening sky and the trees standing silently as if waiting expectantly and tensely for the rising moon. But even with the lovely purplish-blue light coming from without, the shack, but for the two spots of light coming through the door and window, looks eerie and frightening. What adds to the feeling of mystery and desolation is the warm damp smells of decayed leaves, wet moss, rotting bark and green foliage that comes stealing on the breeze through the openings in the shack. Their language is as sharp and definite as the clear cry of the peepers and they tell the mysterious life of the woods and trees through the steady moving years.

Through the cries of birds and frogs and insects and the smells, comes now and then snatches of tunes. They are tunes of familiar songs but they seem to come from afar and are sung

by unearthly voices. Now and then you recognize them for they are from popular songs like "Turkey in the Straw," "My Old Kentucky Home," or "Way Down Upon the Swanee River," and others. At times the voices are loud and strong, then very low or disappear altogether.

For a few moments after the opening of the curtain you hear only these strange pieces of songs and the night symphony of noises. Suddenly it is broken by a voice.

CHARLIE (offstage): Artie, Pat! Here. Look for yourselves. There are still footsteps and the hoofs of Jing-go-tig.

[The voices come from different directions as if the speakers were walking around.

PAT (offstage): Yep, I see 'em, they're all over the place.

EDDIE (offstage): Even a blindman can see 'em. Looks as if Major walked all around the shack.

PAT (offstage): If I catch that Major Kid there won't be enough left of him for a hornet to sting.

MARGIE (offstage): Let's go back and wait for Major to come to his home.

GRACE (offstage): It is late and we ought to be getting home.

MARGIE (putting her head through the door): Gee, I've never seen the place before. (She enters, stops at the door, and looks around.) What a place! It gives me the creeps.

GRACE (coming in looks around slowly): Ugh, it looks spooky.

[The others crowd in now: Adelaide, Artie, Eddie, Charlie, and Pat. The girls look around curiously. The boys seem to know the place.

ADELAIDE: It looks weird, like . . . a mystery story that lost its way into the place.

EDDIE: It's an old shack built by the Cole Kids a long time ago.

CHARLIE: They played rustlers and rangers and outlaws and sheriffs here.

ARTIE: They couldn't have picked a better place. If only these boards could speak.

MARGIE: Now I remember I heard the Jones Kids say once that they came here often to play and I suppose Major Jones uses this place as a hideaway to keep the pony.

PAT: They've no right to come here, these Jones Kids. They're trespassing someone's property.

CHARLIE: I bet Jing-go-tig is hidden somewheres around here.

MARGIE: I don't care where that pony is hidden. I want to go

home. The place makes me jumpy. I expect any minute something to happen.

EDDIE: What! you don't care about Jing-go-tig?

ARTIE: I like the place. On these black boards seem to hang hidden stories of olden days.

ADELAIDE: I feel just as you do, Artie. That smell of the woods and the song of katydids and the singing of the men below gives me a feeling of strange happenings, of something different.

[It has been getting a little darker.]

GRACE: I don't enjoy "strange happenings" and don't like "something different." I heard people say the place is haunted.

CHARLIE (*laughing*): Yes, they say the Black Steer of the Swamp wanders around here and you can hear his bellowing at night.

MARGIE: Charlie Harkind, you stop talking like that right now—if you know what's good for you.

PAT: No use getting the girls scared, Charlie. We didn't come here just to talk. We're out here for a job. We got to find our pony Jing-go-tig.

EDDIE: That's right, but first we got to find Major who took him out of the stable.

PAT: Right you are. Though it's after supper and we haven't got too much time.

CHARLIE: Well, then let's get going. It's getting dark quick.

MARGIE: I'm not going another step except to go home.

GRACE: I second the motion. I say we should go home. It will be dark soon and I should hate to be here at night. This place gives me a feeling of things not being quite right. I've got goose flesh on my arms right now.

ADELAIDE: Stop thinking such silly things and you won't have goose flesh.

PAT: I'm going to find that pony if it takes all night. You, Grace, like to ride him, too, and you should help.

GRACE: How do you know he's here?

PAT: The tracks from the barn lead in this direction.

MARGIE: You said yourself that the trail was confusing and that it led in all directions.

PAT: That doesn't matter.

GRACE: Eddie said that at times it didn't seem like a horse's hoofs at all, but like a cow's.

EDDIE: I didn't say that. How you twist words. I said it was a

horse's tracks and here and there were the tracks of a cow or a steer.

PAT: Let's get out and start searching again instead of standing around. Anyone who doesn't want to go can stay here.

MARGIE: I won't stay here alone.

GRACE: I won't either.

ADELAIDE: I'll stay. I'm not afraid.

GRACE: I don't care.

PAT: Well, suppose one of us stays with you.

MARGIE: Which of you fellows is going to stay?

CHARLIE: I won't.

ARTIE: I won't.

EDDIE: I won't either.

MARGIE: Well, you needn't be all so stuck up.

PAT: I've got an idea, let's draw for it. (*He takes a piece of paper and pencil out of his pocket and tears the paper in four.*) I'm going to put an "X" on one of these papers and the one who draws it stays.

EDDIE: It's okay with me.

THE OTHER BOYS: All right, go ahead.

[*Pat marks one of the slips with an "X". Then he folds the four pieces of paper, throws them into his hat and shakes them up.*

PAT: Draw.

[*Each boy puts his hand in the hat and draws one of the slips. They open them.*

ARTIE: Shucks. (*He walks away disgusted.*)

PAT: No use grumbling, Artie. We all took a chance.

ARTIE: Oh! okay.

MARGIE: Don't think you are doing us such a big favor.

PAT: Well, we'll go now, before it gets real dark.

CHARLIE: Com'on fellows.

[*Charlie, Eddie, and Pat begin walking out.*

MARGIE: Don't stay long. We won't wait too long for you.

CHARLIE: Fraidy-cat.

[*The three go out.*

During the conversation it has become darker. Through the door you can see a giant yellow moon which has risen and seems to be sitting on the top of the trees filling the shack and covering the dark wood with the weird light.

The croaking of the frogs, the peeping of the sandpipers, and the cries of the birds have become sharper. The whole wood

seems alive with exciting sounds and actions. The snatches of the songs have increased in loudness with the darkness and the rising of the moon. For quite a time the three girls and Artie who have remained behind are silent under the spell of the seething woodland night life. Margie and Grace have sat down on the chairs. Adelaide has gone up near the entrance and stands looking outside. Artie sits on the table facing the door. None of them speak for the giant yellow face of the moon peering into the woods and into the shack and the screeching night life has brought with them a feeling of fear to those who do not understand it and who are not sympathetic with it.

MARGIE (*low*): There is more screaming and screeching in this place than I ever heard in my life. It seems to be springing into my head. I hate it.

ADELAIDE: How can you hate it? To me it is like the music of an organ in church.

MARGIE: I am scared and . . .

[The singing of voices coming from afar is now heard quite strongly. The snatches of the tune are from "Turkey in the Straw."

GRACE: If they would only stop that confounded singing.

ARTIE (*talking to no one in particular*): Those are the men singing down in Cole's place. It's that yellow moon as much as the golden yellow cider that makes them do it. Did you ever see grown-up men, old men, dancing in the yellow moon when they have been drinking yellow cider?

MARGIE: There you go again with that crazy talk you're forever letting loose.

GRACE: It seems to me you are all crazy to make so much fuss over a scrubby, scraggy ugly bit of a pony.

ARTIE: Jing-go-tig is not a scraggy, scrubby bit of a pony. Jing-go-tig is a beautiful, swift pony and in his soul is the wildness of our land. He comes from the wild lands of Virginia and Maryland where he roamed with his herd until he was caught and tamed.

ADELAIDE: Besides that, without the pony there is no riding club. We might as well disband the club if we don't find him. If we find him I propose a moonlight ride around the track, each one going around once.

GRACE: Still I don't see why we must stay here in this creepy God-forsaken place waiting while they are looking for the pony. We could just as well have stayed in a nice comfortable house.

ADELAIDE: Fraidy cat! Aren't you a member of the riding club?
ARTIE: Grace always likes to be where it is safe and the ground is dry.

GRACE: Well, what's wrong about that?

MARGIE: I agree with her. It's better than being right in the middle of these noises and screechings and that horrid yellow light crowding in on you as if it wants to choke you. It's . . .

[There is suddenly heard a strange, deep, bellowing-mooing, followed by a series of terrific crashes. Margie and Grace have jumped up and stand in speechless horror.]

GRACE (in a whisper): What! What was that!

MARGIE: Devils! Spirits! Let's run!

ARTIE: Why, it is only the Black Steer of the Swamp. They say he always bellows at night when the yellow moon shines thick.

GRACE: What's the Black Steer of the Swamp?

ARTIE: It was one of Clint Cole's Black Steers. They say he could pull the biggest rocks and was smart as any dog. They say he could even understand words.

GRACE: That's silly.

ARTIE: Says you. Let me tell you animals have often as much sense as people and maybe more. That Black Steer, they say, had sense enough to keep out of Clint Cole's way and out of the way of the men when they drank old hard cider and sang songs, just as they do now.

[The song of the men from below the hill comes up stronger now. "It's Spain, Spain, Spain you ought to be ashamed."

MARGIE: Oh! if they'd only stop!

ARTIE: It fits fine to the tune of the peepers and the frogs and the birds and the yellow moon riding in the sky and the Black Steer bellowing in the woods.

[The bellowing is heard again. Margie and Grace are stony with fright.]

GRACE (low): Oh, if only I hadn't come!

ARTIE (doesn't seem to hear her): One day Clint and the men had drunk too much yellow running cider and they were out on the porch roaring songs so loud they were heard in the sky. All of a sudden the Black Steer came running out of the barn. It got Clint mad and he and the men swore they'd butcher him the moment he was caught.

MARGIE: Did they?

ARTIE: They did not. The Black Steer had ears sharp as a deer

and heard it. So he ran off. He ran off into the swamp bellowing all the time. There he got lost in the swamp and bellowed for help. Two days long he bellowed but Clint and his men were busy drinking cider with the golden glow and singing songs as they are doing now and they never heard the bellowing. The third day when they went out to look there was no bellowing, but they found two black horns sticking out of the swamp.

[There is silence and you only hear the noise of the night life joined by the singing of the men down the hill.]

ARTIE: Now on nights when the yellow moon hangs low over the trees you hear the Black Steer bellowing in the swamp.

GRACE (making a move to go): I can't stand this any longer. There are ants running up and down my back.

MARGIE: I won't stay here another minute. Come.

ARTIE: You can go alone if you want to. What about Pat, Charlie, and Eddie, when they come back and don't find us?

MARGIE: They'll know we've gone home.

ADELAIDE: That's not fair.

GRACE: It's not fair to leave us here in this spooky place. It's getting darker.

ADELAIDE: I'll stay until the others come back. I'm not afraid of spooks.

MARGIE: I can't . . . sh . . . listen!

[In between the noise of frogs, peepers, and birds voices are heard.]

PAT (offstage): You walk along I tell you, or . . .

CHARLIE: Keep moving. Keep moving.

[After a few seconds Pat, Charlie, and Eddie, leading a fourth boy before them, enter. The new boy is Major Jones. He's poorly dressed. His shoes and clothes look much worn. His sulken face is bent down as if afraid to look people in the eye.]

CHARLIE: Here he is.

PAT: He won't talk.

EDDIE: But I know he took Jing-go-tig.

MARGIE: I'm glad you're all here. He ought to be whipped.

[The air is again filled with deep bellowing. All are silent.]

GRACE: There he goes, the Black Steer of the Swamp. It frightens me.

MAJOR: Black Steer of the Swamp, fiddlesticks.

MARGIE: How dare you talk! You brought us here. Where is Jing-go-tig?

MAJOR: How should I know?

EDDIE: You took that pony out of the barn.

MAJOR: I did not.

[There is again the deep bellowing. Grace and Margie are ready to run.]

GRACE: This is awful. Let's go home and talk to Major on the way. The roaring of the Black Steer is getting on my nerves.

MARGIE: Let's get done with this.

EDDIE (to Major): You took the pony. Where is it? You better talk quick.

MAJOR: I took it just the same as the bellowing you heard is made by the Black Steer of the Swamp.

CHARLIE: You think you know more than everybody else. Everybody says the swamp is haunted.

EDDIE: I suppose you know more than Chuck and Taylor and everybody.

PAT: Don't let's get away from the subject. Where is that pony?

MAJOR: I don't know and I know that's no Black Steer of the Swamp roaring.

PAT: Aw, c'mon . . .

ADELAIDE: Why don't you fellows give Major a chance to tell us? Let him speak.

CHARLIE: He doesn't talk.

ADELAIDE: That is because you don't let 'im. Come, Major, what is that noise? It frightened Margie and Grace to death, and it even made me feel a little queer. Only I like queer feelings.

MAJOR: Why that's only. . . .

PAT (interrupting him): Listen . . . What's that? . . .

[From afar in between the noise of the night there is a sound of Hallooing, then cries of Pa . . . at, Grace, Edd . . . die. The sounds are long-drawn like someone seeking the bearers of the names. All have crowded around the door. The moon from deep yellow has changed to bright shiny silver.]

PAT: That's Dad! (He rushes out and begins shouting.) Da . . . ad. Daddy . . . We are here! Up in the sha . . . ack.

GRACE: We should have thought that they would worry about us.

MR. FOWLER (offstage, his voice coming nearer): Pa . . . at Gra . . . ace. . . .

EDDIE: Dad . . . Dad! We are here . . . at the shack. . . .

[A few seconds later there is a crashing sound and Mr. Fowler, a big burly man, enters.]

MR. FOWLER: What in the world are you kids doing here? Why

didn't you tell us you were going out? What made you come up here in the nighttime? You gave us the scare of our lives. I've got people looking for you all over. Wait. (*He goes to the door and begins swinging vigorously a cowbell * he holds in his hand vigorously.*) That's the signal we made up to tell the others that you were found.

PAT: You see, Dad, we wanted to take a little ride on Jing-go-tig around the track after supper and when we came in the stall we found Jing-go-tig gone. We were out looking for him.

MR. FOWLER: That's funny . . . How did he get. . . .

CHARLIE: We don't know, but we found Major's knife right near the barn.

PAT: So we set out to find him and we did.

EDDIE: We followed his tracks and caught him.

MARGIE: But now he won't talk.

PAT: He knows where that pony is.

MARGIE: He's hiding him somewhere.

MR. FOWLER (*kindly*): Are you, Major?

MAJOR: No, sir, I'm not. . . .

[*The deep long bellowing is heard again.*

GRACE: There he goes again. I can't stand this. I want to go home.

ARTIE: That's the Black Steer of the Swamp bellowing. They say he roars when the big yellow moon shines and Cole's men, full of hard yellow cider, sing their songs. It's a strange and mysterious noise.

MAJOR: Old women's tales. It's as silly as saying that I took Jing-go-tig.

MR. FOWLER: Why, Major, I've heard that story too.

MAJOR: Mr. Fowler, that (*trying to imitate Artie*) mysterious noise is nothing . . . but . . . roaring and bellowing of the stags heard sometimes at night in the woods.

PAT: What!

EDDIE: Who said that?

MARGIE: Really!

MR. FOWLER: Perhaps. It sounds like a simple explanation.

MARGIE: Gee, is that all it was.

GRACE: If I had only known. . . .

ADELAIDE: There you are and that's what we were scared of.

* (If you have a well-trained dog, it would be a nice dramatic touch to have him run in at this point.)

ARTIE: Hm, maybe Major's right. I've heard people who live here all the time say that stags will roar at night.

EDDIE (*somewhat lame*): Well, you took that pony, anyway. I am sure of that. I saw your footsteps and then I saw Jing-go-tig's hoof prints and (*triumphantly*) I found your knife not far from the barn door.

PAT: You can't deny that.

MR. FOWLER: What have you to say to this, Major?

MAJOR: I tell you, Mr. Fowler, I did not take any pony.

PAT: Then what were you doing near our barn tonight? You had no right to be there.

MAJOR: I don't have to tell.

MARGIE: You better tell or we're going to get the police.

MR. FOWLER: I think you better tell us, boy.

ARTIE: It'd be better all around.

ADELAIDE: Don't threaten him. (*To Major*.) Come, Major. We all know you were at the barn because we found your knife there and Jing-go-tig is gone.

MAJOR: Well . . . well. . . .

MR. FOWLER (*kindly*): Come, Major, you needn't be afraid. You just tell us what happened.

ADELAIDE: Yes, Major, come on.

MAJOR: You . . . you wouldn't take me into your riding club . . . just because I am poor.

PAT: Well . . . that wasn't the real reason.

MARGIE: No, that wasn't the real reason. It's because you're always so grouchy and you don't ever look at people. And you never smile.

GRACE: No, you never laugh, Major. Really, you have never looked me into the face.

MAJOR (*blurting out*): No one ever looks at me and (*fiercely*) no one ever talks to me . . . nice.

[There is silence for a time as if they all feel the truth of Major's words. You only hear the singing of frogs and birds. From below the hill now comes strains "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow."

MR. FOWLER: I'm sorry to hear that, children.

ADELAIDE: Perhaps if we're better friends with Major, he would be a better friend to us.

ARTIE: Come, Major, what do you say? Begin by telling us just like a friend, why you were at the barn tonight and . . . where Jing-go-tig is.

MAJOR: Honest, I don't know. (*He speaks hesitating as if still afraid.*)

MR. FOWLER: Why were you at the barn?

MAJOR: Well, (*pause*) well . . . I wanted to be a member of the riding club. I love ponies and I love Jing-go-tig more than any other pony. He comes from where I was born. Down Maryland, off Chincoteague Island. There, ponies still roam around wild in herds as they used to do in olden times. They call these ponies Jing-go-tigs.* I don't know why. That's how he was given that queer name by the people who sold it to your dad, Pat. (*He stops abruptly.*)

MR. FOWLER: Go on, Major, that's interesting. We are learning something new, as we did about the bellowing at night in the woods.

MAJOR: When I saw Jing-go-tig, and all of you riding him and you never asked me, and you didn't even let me go near him, it made me angry . . . Sometimes I'd come to the stable . . . while you were eating and I knew no one was there . . . I'd come to his stable and look at him and stroke his glossy skin. I just couldn't help it. That Jing-go-tig knew me and wasn't scared of me. I was there tonight and must've dropped my knife . . . I never took him out of the stable.

PAT: But Jing-go-tig is gone.

MAJOR: I didn't take him.

ADELAIDE: Where could he have gone?

MAJOR: I think I know.

EDDIE: So you do know! eh . . .

MR. FOWLER: Eddie, let Major speak.

MAJOR: I'm just guessing, Mr. Fowler. Sometimes these tamed ponies get kind of wild again. I heard my father say that.

Then they run around wildly as they did when they were free.

CHARLIE: I still don't understand. There were tracks of cattle next to the horse's hoofs. And . . .

MAJOR (*breaking in*): When I thought you were through with your supper I went away from the barn and got into the meadow. I just wanted a little ride, so I got on one of the steers. He was kind of wild so I let him run hard. All of a sudden I saw Jing-go-tig race past me. Gee, he was like the wind, his white mane flying in the air golden and silvery. I

* Jing-go-tigs are wild ponies still found sometimes in the upper part of Virginia and the border of Maryland.

tried to make the steer race after him, but he didn't get very far. Soon he was tired and I got off. I began following Jing-go-tig's tracks. They went past the shack. That's how you saw my footsteps near his tracks. When I heard your voices I hid because I did not want to meet you.

[*They are all silent for a time.*

PAT } : But where is the pony?
EDDIE }

ADELAIDE: Oh! I hope he did not wander into the swamp. Do you think, Major, he's gone wild and will never come back?

MAJOR: I think he'll come back. A pony like Jing-go-tig is too smart to wander into the swamp. That pony can take care of himself.

[*From right near comes a voice crying Hello-a . . . where are you? . . .*

MR. FOWLER (*going to the door, making a cup of his hand and shouting*): We're up in the shack . . . This way . . .

[*There is a crashing sound and a young tall fellow comes in.*

MR. FOWLER: Oh, it's you, Ira.

IRA: Yes, Mr. Fowler. I heard the bell ringing, but I thought I'd come up anyway. What's happened?

PAT: Jing-go-tig's gone and Major . . .

IRA (*interrupting him*): Who said Jing-go-tig's gone? I saw him with my own eyes in the stall before I left. He was munching oats.

BOYS and GIRLS: What! He's there! In the stall! Eating!

IRA: Why, yes. I tell you I saw him with my own eyes.

MR. FOWLER: I wonder how that happened! Major said he saw the pony running wild and I believe him.

MAJOR (*eagerly*): I know what happened. They always do that. Those ponies are smart. My father told me. He's just wild a bit and wanted to run wild and when he ran the wildness out of himself, he went home.

ARTIE (*as if to himself with a little laugh*): When the yellow moon hangs big over the trees there is a spell of mystery over everything, and then queer things happen, even to ponies.

GRACE: Then the pony was home all the time and we didn't have to come up here, in the dark and scary . . .

MAJOR: It isn't dark at all, Grace. There's a full silver white moon in the sky which makes the woods bright as daylight.

ADELAIDE (*going to the door and looking out*): Yes. Look, everything in the woods looks so different now. It's like a

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night-daylight among the trees. What a difference with a change of color in the moon. It is all changed.

ARTIE: Maybe it was only the mysterious yellow moon that caused all these strange things during the evening. Jing-go-tig going wild, us being scared; the stags roaring in the woods and Cole's men singing songs.

ADELAIDE (*laughing*): And when the moon turns clear and silvery, everything looks and acts just . . . right. (*Laughing.*) It is all a question of the color of the moon.

MR. FOWLER: Yellow mysterious moon, or clear white moon, you kids come right home. Your mothers have had plenty of worries about you.

ALL SPEAKING AT ONCE: We are going. I'm sure glad we can go. It's not been much fun staying here.

[They all crowd in the door pushing out. Major seems to have been forgotten. For a moment he stands alone, then with a rush Adelaide returns, the others crowding behind her.

ADELAIDE: Come, Major, we almost forgot you. You are now a member of the riding club.

PAT: Come along and say goodnight to Jing-go-tig.

MAJOR: Gee! That's nice. I'm coming.

[He follows them as the CURTAIN CLOSES slowly showing the white silver moon flooding the room.

FOG ON THE BAY

BY CLARICE WARDALL

CHARACTERS

HELEN MANNERS

MAX HEYWARD

THE STRANGER

INSPECTOR ANDERSON

O'MALLEY, *his assistant*

COMMUTERS

MEMBERS OF THE FERRY CREW

Time: The play will act fully thirty minutes.

Place: The upper deck of a ferryboat.

COSTUMES AND PROPERTIES

The costumes are modern. You will need a few caps to denote deck hands and ferry officers.

The properties required for this play are very few. Just some bundles and boxes such as shoppers carry and a ring with a large glass "diamond" in it.

LIGHTING

The action takes place on a ferryboat during a fog. The simplest way to suggest this is with a subdued daylight against a dull grayish-white background as the author suggests. There are, of course, other ways of simulating a fog, more professionally. Any book on staging will tell you how to do this.

SETTING

Part of the aft upper deck of a ferryboat. The railing enclosing the deck appears at rear and at front stage. The superstruc-

ture at the center of the boat is suggested by long, angular shadows cutting across the part of the deck in view. It is a foggy evening. The illusion of fog may be achieved with a dull white backdrop and subdued lights, or any of the preparations which give off a white, wispy vapor; dry ice has been used with success. As the scene progresses, fog horns and ship signal bells are heard, noises of the busy activity on the Bay.

THE PLAY

SCENE ONE

The time is about 5:30 p.m. The boat is in the ferry slip, just about to pull away. As the curtain opens, the last of the passengers are coming aboard, passing from left to right stage as they hurry or stroll or walk tiredly toward the sheltered portion of the boat. For the most part, they are typical commuters, leaving their daily work in the city for their homes in the residential districts across the Bay.

Helen Manners, a pretty young woman, attractively dressed, comes aboard in the crowd, but instead of moving along with the others, she stops at almost every step, looking back anxiously. To avoid being jostled, she steps to front stage and stands near the railing, still watching.

The last of the group to come aboard are two women. One, with her arms full of bundles, has evidently been shopping. She speaks to her companion in a high, shrill voice; that carries above the tread of feet on the deck.

LADY WITH THE BUNDLES: I walked and walked, and I finally found what I wanted. They're python skin with straps crossing like this. And if you don't think I had a job finding a bag to match! Well, I went into a dozen places—

[As these last two go off at right stage, Max Heyward enters at left, breathless with running. Helen's face lights up with pleasure when she sees him.

HELEN (calling): Max! I was afraid you'd missed it.

MAX (comes to her and takes her hands for a moment, while he catches his breath): Just made it. I had to make your boat tonight.

HELEN: I was afraid they would leave without you. It's good luck that the fog slowed up their schedule.

MAX: It's some fog, all right. Are you warm enough, Helen? Do you want to go inside?

HELEN: No, I like to be out in the fog. I've always loved it.

[Behind the back drop, the red (port) light on the ferry slip comes into view at right stage and moves slowly across until it passes out of sight at left.]

HELEN: We're moving out into the thick of it now. It's like going into another world.

MAX: Our world, and we're all alone in it.

HELEN: A lovely world, mysterious, exciting. Anything can happen in it. Did you ever read the story about the fog that changed a man's life? It happened in London, I think.

MAX: Maybe it will do the same for us tonight.

HELEN: Maybe.

MAX: I've been a coward. I've put off—something, and now this may be the last chance.

HELEN: Yes?

MAX: Do you remember my telling you about that opening in the Valley office? The boss has offered it to me, and I've accepted.

HELEN (faintly): How wonderful! It's what you've wanted, isn't it?

MAX: It means a better salary and real responsibility. (*Taking a deep breath.*) I start on the job Monday.

HELEN: Then this may be the last time we'll ever see each other.

MAX: We can't let it be! I love you, Helen. It's been that way ever since we met. That was four months ago, and it'll be that way the rest of my life. Will you marry me and come with me?

HELEN: Do you really mean that?

MAX (somewhat petulantly): Of course I mean it. Who wouldn't adore you? You must have had dozens of proposals.

HELEN: None that I've ever said "yes" to, before.

MAX: You mean you—

HELEN: Oh, yes! (*He comes close to her.*) Not here . . . Max . . . People are looking . . . Wait. . . .

MAX: You'll love it down there, Helen. There's a house I've had my eye on. It seemed pretty nice to me, but we won't get it if you don't like it.

HELEN: I like it already, if you do. Tell me about it.

MAX: It's white stucco with a tile roof. (*He takes her arm, and they start walking off at right front to take a turn around the deck.*) It has hardwood floors throughout. The walls are

tinted plaster, and there's the biggest fireplace you ever saw. There are windows all the way around, and the sun shines every day there. It has five rooms: a living-room, a dining-room, and—well, you know, five rooms. (*At the end of this speech, they have left the stage.*)

[Offstage, at rear right, a man shouts "Man overboard!" A woman screams. The cry of "Man overboard" is repeated excitedly by other voices. A man calls, "Throw a buoy over the side!" Two men, members of the deck crew, run on at right stage. They take a position at left back stage and lean against the railing to peer into the fog.

FIRST DECK HAND: Figure he's about thirty feet aft, the speed we were going.

SECOND DECK HAND: If he isn't in the paddles.

FIRST DECK HAND (*calling up to the pilot house*): Hey, Joe, swing that searchlight over here.

SECOND DECK HAND: It might as well be a candle.

FIRST DECK HAND (*pointing suddenly*): What's that?

SECOND DECK HAND: It ain't nothing but more fog.

FIRST DECK HAND (*after a moment*): Guess not.

[Two deck officers enter at right. They are trying to hold back a crowd of commuters which follows them.

FIRST COMMUTER (*a woman, speaking hysterically*): It was the most uncanny thing I ever saw. He was standing there and then he wasn't. The fog just ate him up!

SECOND COMMUTER: And then we heard the splash, didn't we, Esther?

FIRST DECK OFFICER: Now, ladies and gentlemen, don't get excited. He'll be picked up.

FIRST COMMUTER: That's his coat and hat you picked up. He laid them down on the deck by the railing, and then he was gone!

FIRST DECK OFFICER: Yes, yes. Now I'm going to ask all of you to go inside out of this fog. Mr. Borden here will take your names and addresses and get your story. We may still find Mr. Hamilton on board. It may have been something else that splashed overboard. However, I can assure you that a thorough search will be made of these waters.

THIRD COMMUTER (*a pompous old gentleman*): Do you mean to say, sir, that we're to stop here in the middle of the ferry lane until you find him? Are you going to endanger the lives

of all your passengers to try and save one? Why, we'll be rammed and cut in two if we stop another moment in this fog!

FIRST DECK OFFICER: We'll soon be under way, sir. They're sending out a boat from Shoe Island Station to continue the search.

SECOND DECK OFFICER: All right, ladies and gentlemen. Will you step back this way? I want to get all your names. (*He succeeds in herding them off right, except for two men who remain behind.*)

FIRST DECK OFFICER (*to the deck hands*): Do you see anything?

SECOND DECK HAND: Nothin' but fog.

FIRST DECK HAND (*indicating the two passengers*): There are two more of them, sir.

[The officer turns around to see the men, who have been watching. They are tall, heavy men, well-dressed but with the appearance that they may have, upon occasion, slept in their suits. One of them speaks.]

ANDERSON: I'm Inspector Anderson of the City Police. (*He flips his coat open to show a badge.*) This is O'Malley, my assistant.

DECK OFFICER: That's fine. Will you men go help Borden keep the passengers under control? There's danger in their all rushing to one side of the boat.

ANDERSON (*brushing the request aside*): We're on official business here. Did you say the man's name was Hamilton?

DECK OFFICER (*turning to watch over the side for some sign of the missing man*): Yes.

ANDERSON: How do you know?

DECK OFFICER: His hat and coat are marked with name labels.
J. Cartwright Hamilton was his name.

O'MALLEY: It was him!

DECK OFFICER (*his interest aroused*): Anyone you know?

ANDERSON: I'll say. He was a notorious jewel thief. You might call him a connoisseur of jewelry. He never took more than one piece at a time, but he knew what to pick! He got away with a ten-carat diamond ring at the Park-Hopkins tea-dance this afternoon. I was on his trail and followed him to this ferry.

DECK OFFICER: Tough luck, Inspector, but I guess this solves your case.

ANDERSON: Not if I don't recover that diamond.

O'MALLEY: Five thousand dollars reward money gone overboard!

ANDERSON (*to himself*): And yet it's not like him . . . Did anyone see him go over?

DECK OFFICER (*to First Deck Hand*): Shorty, you saw it, didn't you?

SHORTY: In this fog, I can't rightly say I saw anything, sir. It was just a black blur going over the rail, and then I heard the splash.

DECK OFFICER: Well, keep on looking.

SHORTY: Yes, sir.

ANDERSON: It was a trick. He didn't jump overboard.

DECK OFFICER: I hope you're right.

ANDERSON: He'd do anything to save that diamond. There was every chance for him to escape, and he knew it. (*With conviction.*) He's still aboard.

DECK OFFICER: It shouldn't be hard to find him, then.

ANDERSON (*laughing grimly*): Harder than you think. I can tell you what his habits are. I can tell you what he eats, what he drinks, what he smokes, but I don't know what he looks like. He's five foot nine, and right now he's minus a hat and topcoat. That's all we have to go on.

DECK OFFICER: Then you do have a tough job. Half of these commuters don't wear a hat or an overcoat, rain or shine. You'd be surprised how many of them write poems about the wind in their hair.

SECOND DECK HAND: That's the signal from the Shoe Island boat, sir.

DECK OFFICER: We'll be under way, then. (*To the two detectives.*) Come up to the pilot house and we'll have a look at these things. (*Indicating the coat and hat he is carrying.*)

ANDERSON (*as they go off at right with the Deck Officer*): There'll be men at the pier, and every person who gets off will have to pass by them. We'll find him somehow.

[*When the three have left, Max and Helen enter at right back stage.*

HELEN: We'll do the kitchen in white, with touches of red and black. I'll cook you such lovely dinners, Max.

MAX: These lovely hands should never have to do any work. (*The two crew members, ridiculing in pantomime the lovesick pair, leave at right.*)

HELEN: It's not "work" when it's for someone you love.

MAX: You look like an angel made out of mist, in this fog. I'm afraid to let go of you for fear I might lose you.

HELEN: It's nice of you to think of me as an angel, but I must confess I have at least one bad habit.

MAX: I don't believe it.

HELEN: It's true. I collect restaurant menus.

MAX: We'll frame them and hang them in all the rooms.

HELEN: I have one in my purse that I've waited months to get. I traded with a girl at the office for it. Would you like to see it?

MAX: No, I only want to look at you. What a chump I am! I should have asked you a month ago to marry me. Would you have said yes then?

HELEN: Yes.

[At Max's words, "I only want to look at you," a stranger enters at right. A man of about 60, he is of medium height, fashionably dressed. His speech is cultured, his politeness almost overdone. He has been watching and listening intently, and at this point he interrupts the two.]

STRANGER: You were right, young man, not to have waited any longer. Accept my congratulations.

MAX: Thank you.

STRANGER: And to you, my dear. May you have a full lifetime of happiness with this fine boy.

HELEN (*warmly, touched by something of melancholy in his voice*): Thank you, sir.

STRANGER: Since Adele is gone, I've learned how quickly happiness can depart.

HELEN (*curiously*): Adele?

STRANGER: How beautifully you speak her name! I was going to ask her to be my bride, but she was killed in an accident on the very day I bought the ring that was to have been our engagement ring.

HELEN: How sad!

STRANGER: She was very lovely. You know, you remind me of her.

HELEN: That is sweet of you.

STRANGER: It was years ago, but I've carried the ring with me ever since. By Jove! I've an ideal! I shall give the ring to you, sir, to give this young lady as a token of your engagement.

MAX: Sorry, but we can't accept it.

STRANGER (*heartily*): Why, of course you can! Let me show it to you. (*He takes a ring from a vest pocket.*)

HELEN: Oh-h-h!

MAX: It's as big as a billiard ball!

HELEN: Even in the fog it sparkles blue and white.

STRANGER: It is a rare diamond. Won't you accept it? I know Adele would like you to.

MAX: It's too expensive a gift, sir.

STRANGER: I assure you, young man, I can afford it.

MAX (*stonily*): Well, thank you very much, but—

HELEN: Oh, Max, please! Please let's take it! I think it's the most beautiful gift anyone could think of.

MAX: But, Helen—

HELEN: Max, *please* put it on my finger.

STRANGER: Here it is.

MAX (*grudgingly*): All right.

HELEN: There. Isn't it beautiful?

STRANGER: And may you both be very happy. (*He sighs.*)

HELEN: I know we will.

MAX (*sarcastically*): With a valuable jewel like this, shouldn't there be a deed of gift or something?

STRANGER: You're quite right, my boy. I'll send a deed to the young lady in the morning. What is your address?

HELEN: 232 Prospect Drive. Helen Manners.

STRANGER: 232 Prospect. I'll remember. And in the meantime you keep the ring, Miss Manners.

HELEN: Thank you, sir.

STRANGER: Not at all. You've given me much pleasure by accepting this gift. Goodbye. (*He makes a courtly bow, then leaves at right.*)

HELEN: Goodbye. Isn't he a wonderful person, Max? Isn't it the most wonderful thing that has ever happened to us? I believe in luck. *Our* life has begun with luck.

MAX: Helen, I wanted to buy you a ring, but everything happened so quick I didn't have time to get it. I didn't want a stranger to give you my engagement ring. I'll get one tomorrow when the shops are open.

HELEN: Don't be grumpy, Max. He was so unhappy, and he got so much pleasure in giving it to us.

MAX: I hate to disappoint you, dear, but that "diamond" is much too big. It can't be real. It's some kind of glass.

HELEN: I know, darling. But I'm a girl that's engaged to the

man she loves, and I must have a ring. The one you buy me tomorrow, I'll love and treasure all my life, but, for this evening, it will be fun pretending this is real! (She holds her hand out to admire the ring.)

CURTAIN

SCENE Two

The time is some forty minutes later. The ferry has completed its crossing and is docked at the mole. Part of the enclosed ramp and walkway leading from the ferry deck to the train level is seen. On the wall at rear stage is a sign, "This Way to Trains," and advertising posters such as "This Year Visit Beautiful Lake Velvet" and "Spend Six Weeks in Old Mexico."

Detectives Anderson and O'Malley are standing at center stage, facing the ramp down which the passengers must come.

O'MALLEY: They're almost all off, boss.

ANDERSON: And we haven't spotted him.

O'MALLEY: Maybe he did jump overboard.

ANDERSON: Don't try to think, O'Malley, just look! Here come some more.

[A group of passengers hurry down the ramp at right front and cross the stage to exit at left. In trying to get a good view of those on his side, O'Malley collides with one of the commuters, an elderly lady with a haughty manner.

ELDERLY LADY: What do you mean by bumping into me that way, young man! The trains are in that direction!

O'MALLEY: Yes, ma'am. (He turns to go with the disembarking passengers. Anderson sees him just as he is almost off the stage and calls: "O'Malley!" With a start, O'Malley turns back to the job.)

[There is an interval before the next passengers appear.

ANDERSON: If we've missed him, I'll skin you alive, O'Malley!

O'MALLEY (hurt): Why me, boss?

[Max and Helen enter at right and stroll down the ramp, arm in arm. She reaches up her left hand to brush a fleck of powder off his lapel, and the detectives see the diamond.

ANDERSON (stepping up with O'Malley to bar their passing):

Excuse me, lady, but I think we two should know each other. (He shows his badge.) I'm Inspector Anderson, of the City Police.

HELEN (*still in the rosy dream*): How do you do? I'm Helen Manners. This is my fiance, Max Heyward. (*She makes a gesture with her left hand, and the diamond flashes again.*)

MAX (*shaking hands with Anderson, although the detective can't quite figure out how that happened*): It's nice to meet you, Inspector. Will you excuse us now? We have a lot of things to do.

ANDERSON: Sorry, we must detain you. I have some questions to ask, and you'll save us all a lot of time and trouble by answering promptly and correctly.

MAX: What is this, a new quiz program?

ANDERSON: It's nothing new to you, is it, Heyward? (*To Helen.*) Where did you get that ring?

HELEN: This? Isn't it lovely? It's my engagement ring. He gave it to me.

ANDERSON: So you gave it to her! Now wasn't that nice of you! How much do you make a week, Heyward?

MAX: None of your business! . . . It'll be sixty-five a week, Helen, after the first.

HELEN: Wonderful, Max!

MAX: Will that be enough?

HELEN: Why, it's princely, darling!

MAX: And now we do have to go, Inspector.

ANDERSON: Let's not kid each other, Mr. J. Cartwright Hamilton. You're under arrest, you and the girl friend.

MAX: This is going too far! We'll protest to your sponsor, Inspector Anderson.

ANDERSON (*in a fine rage*): This is not a radio program! (*Then, in more normal tones.*) Let's get down to business. Where were you at 4:15 this afternoon?

MAX: I was at the office. No, I wasn't. I went out to call on a customer.

ANDERSON: Did you go back to the office?

MAX: No. I came right on to the ferry.

ANDERSON: And the customer's name?

MAX: T. R. Roberts. But as a matter of fact, I didn't see Roberts. He wasn't there, after I went all the way out to the Sunset district!

[The last of the passengers enter at right. This group of five includes the Lady with the Bundles and her friend, and The Stranger, who manages to keep the others always between him and Anderson.]

ANDERSON: Well, wasn't that too bad! (*Almost shouting.*) You're lying, my light-fingered friend! At 4:15 you were at the Park-Hopkins tea-dance, at a table next to that of Mrs. Hermione Phillips!

[Curious to see what is happening, their attention arrested by Anderson's accusation, the passengers pause just beyond center stage and turn to watch. The Stranger perforce must pause too, although it is not to his liking.]

MAX: That's not so! (*He turns to Helen for support and finds her looking at him strangely.*) You don't believe him, do you?

HELEN: No, but—

ANDERSON: So you weren't at the Park-Hopkins this afternoon?

MAX: No!

HELEN: Who is Mrs. Phillips?

MAX: Who is Mrs. Phillips! Any numbskull knows who she is! She's a millionairess twenty times over and owns half the city, she and a half-dozen of ex-husbands!

HELEN (*angrily*): Did you call me a numbskull, Mr. J. Cartwright Hamilton?

MAX: Don't you call me that.

HELEN: You were at the Park-Hopkins with Mrs. Phillips!

MAX: I wasn't with anybody!

HELEN: Gigolo!

MAX (*shouting*): And I wasn't at the Park-Hopkins!

HELEN: How could I be so mistaken in a man! Here, take your ring back! I hope you choke on it.

ANDERSON: Wait a minute, I'll take that.

MAX: You're welcome to it.

ANDERSON: Very clever, young lady, and very funny, too.

HELEN (*sniffing*): Laugh, then. I'll never laugh again.

ANDERSON: Oh, I don't know. They say they have some good entertainments at Teháchipi.

HELEN (*horrified*): Teháchipi!

ANDERSON: Yes. The women's prison.

HELEN: Max, help me!

[During the rest of the dialogue, Anderson listens intently and indicates to O'Malley to take notes of their conversation.]

MAX: Miss Manners, how can you be so mistaken? I'm that well-known jewel thief, J. Cartwright Hamilton.

HELEN: Max, please!

MAX (*enjoying the situation to the full*): And where were you at 4:15 this afternoon?

[*The Lady with the Bundles, obviously relishing the scene, catches her breath audibly at this point. Anderson throws an impatient glance at the group, and The Stranger finds it expedient to study the poster, "Spend Six Weeks in Old Mexico."*]

HELEN: I was down in the files, looking up some records for Mr. Miller.

MAX (*imitating Anderson*): Oh, you were, were you? Were you alone?

HELEN: Yes.

MAX: All the time you were down there?

HELEN: Yes.

MAX: And how long was that?

HELEN: Almost until five.

MAX: Rather a long time, wasn't it?

HELEN: Oh, I don't know. It was something rather special.

MAX: The stairs in that room go up to the side entrance don't they? One could go out to the street and come back the same way, without anyone seeing. That's so, isn't it?

HELEN: I suppose so. But Max, I didn't do anything! Won't you believe me?

MAX: You wouldn't believe me, Helen.

HELEN: I was just angry about that Mrs. Phillips. It was jealousy, I suppose. Honestly, Max, I believe you!

MAX (*relenting*): Darling, I'm a brute. Forgive me.

HELEN: Let's never doubt each other again.

[*The group of commuters that have been watching now turn to leave.*

THE LADY WITH THE BUNDLES: I like Hobby Lobby best. Charlie McCarthy is good too. (*They leave at left stage. At her remarks, Anderson shudders and sort of growls, but manages to control his wrath.*)

O'MALLEY: What do you know, chief? They think it was a—

ANDERSON (*interrupting*): Don't you say it! Come on, you two. let's get back on board.

MAX: Why?

ANDERSON: Because you're under arrest.

MAX: What for?

ANDERSON (*almost shouting*): For stealing this "engagement ring" from Mrs. Phillips.

MAX: But we didn't steal it. It was given to us.

ANDERSON: Now I've heard everything! Santy Claus dropped it down your chimney, no doubt.

HELEN: It's the truth, Inspector. A man gave it to us, back there on the ferry.

ANDERSON: He gave it to you! Why? Because he liked your looks?

HELEN: I don't know. Because he—Oh, Max!

MAX: Yes. It was Hamilton.

ANDERSON: So Hamilton gave you the ring. Can you describe him?

MAX: He was about five feet ten, medium build, around fifty, rather more than less.

HELEN: He had blue eyes and sandy hair. He was very polite.

MAX: Too polite. I didn't like him, from the first.

ANDERSON: I don't know. That's kind of a fishy story.

MAX: Give us a chance to prove it's true! He might be in this building right now, watching us!

HELEN: Please give us this chance!

ANDERSON: All right, we'll take a look around, but don't try anything funny.

HELEN: We won't. Max, where shall we start? They've all left but us. They're on the trains by now!

MAX: Not all. That woman with all the bundles was on board.
(They are looking off at left stage.)

HELEN: She's dropped them. I knew she would!

ANDERSON: That fellow with her is picking them up.

O'MALLEY: Pretty spry, isn't he? I think he's in a hurry.

ANDERSON: O'Malley!

O'MALLEY: I know, don't think. Look.

MAX: He's bowing.

O'MALLEY: Like in the minuet. Oh what's the use, boss? You and I looked them all over.

HELEN *(in sudden realization)*: That's the man!

MAX: No one else would bow like that. Anderson, I tell you, that's your man!

ANDERSON: O'Malley, ask the gentleman to step over here.

O'MALLEY: You mean "ask" him?

ANDERSON *(almost shouting)*: Will you go get him, O'Malley?

O'MALLEY: All right, chief. *(He runs off at left. The others watch intently.)*

ANDERSON *(to Max, thinking aloud)*: You know, you are young to be Hamilton, but then nobody knows very much about him.

HELEN: It will be all right, darling. I know he's the one. I can

MAX: I'm sure of it.

ANDERSON: He's coming willingly enough, all right. Hm-m. That's a bad sign. It would have been better for you if he had bolted.

HELEN: What do you mean?

ANDERSON: He'll never admit that story you told me.

HELEN: I never thought of that! Oh, Max!

MAX: Don't worry, dear.

[O'Malley and The Stranger return at left. The Stranger has lost none of his suave politeness.]

THE STRANGER: Good evening, Inspector. I'm told you wish to see me?

ANDERSON: Yes, I do. Heyward, is this the man?

MAX: Yes.

ANDERSON: Miss Manners?

HELEN: Yes! We find your gift has brought us less happiness than you wished, Mr. Hamilton.

THE STRANGER: Really, I don't understand! I never gave this young lady anything.

MAX: And I suppose you never saw us before.

THE STRANGER: That's correct.

MAX: Why, you— (*O'Malley holds him back.*)

ANDERSON: I'm sure you won't object to answering a few questions, Mr.—

THE STRANGER: Waters. Richard Waters.

ANDERSON: What is your business, Mr. Waters?

THE STRANGER: I'm an architect. My office is in the Huff Building.

ANDERSON: Did you ever see this ring before?

THE STRANGER: No . . . It's a very beautiful diamond, isn't it?

ANDERSON: So near and yet so far, eh?

THE STRANGER: I'm not envious of other people's diamonds, Inspector. The lady who lost that ring will be appropriately grateful to you for its recovery. Congratulations on the efficient work.

ANDERSON: Thank you.

HELEN: Don't be so polite to him, Inspector. Ask him where he was this afternoon.

ANDERSON: Miss Manners, please keep out of this. Waters, where were you at 4:15 this afternoon?

THE STRANGER: I was in my office.

ANDERSON: Can you prove that?

THE STRANGER: Yes, I can.

HELEN (*suddenly hysterical*): You can't because it's not true! Don't believe him, Inspector! How dare you tell a lie like that! (*She pummels his chest with one hand and shakes his arm with the other. In so doing, she unobtrusively slips something from her purse into the Stranger's coat pocket. He is much too bewildered and embarrassed to notice this.*) Look what a guilty face he has! Max, someone, makes him tell the truth! You can't do this to us, you can't! You must tell the truth!

THE STRANGER: Inspector, please!

ANDERSON: That will do, Miss Manners. (*He and Max pull her away. Max puts his arm around her to soothe her. It is really unnecessary; her hysterics have departed as suddenly as they came. She is slightly out of breath, but has lost her look of fright.*) Were you at the Park-Hopkins this afternoon, Mr. Waters?

THE STRANGER: No. I haven't been there in all of three months.

ANDERSON: You're sure?

THE STRANGER: Yes.

HELEN: There are many who can identify you, Mr. Waters. Will you face them?

THE STRANGER: Why, surely! Any time tomorrow, Inspector.

HELEN: By tomorrow he'll be out of the state! Don't let him go, Inspector!

ANDERSON: I can't hold him. You two don't seem to realize you were the ones caught with the diamond.

HELEN: But he's lying and you know it!

THE STRANGER: The Inspector is welcome to investigate me.

ANDERSON: Thank you, I shall do so. Will you give O'Malley your home address?

THE STRANGER: Certainly. (*He does so in an aside.*)

HELEN (*pleading*): Don't let him go, Inspector. I insist that you search him.

THE STRANGER (*amused*): Search me! And what for?

ANDERSON: That's what I'd like to know. What for, Miss Manners?

HELEN: For—for something to prove he's lying! Please search him, Inspector!

ANDERSON: Of course you have a right to refuse, Mr. Waters.

THE STRANGER: I know that, but to prove I'm willing to cooperate with you, go ahead, Inspector.

ANDERSON: Thank you. If you please—

MAX: I don't think it will do any good, Helen. He's too smart to keep anything on him.

HELEN (*confidently*): You never can tell, Max.

ANDERSON: Say, what is this in your pocket?

THE STRANGER: I really don't know. (*Wondering*.) How did it get there?

ANDERSON: So, besides being a jewel thief, you're a menu snitcher!

THE STRANGER: That isn't mine, I tell you! I—

ANDERSON: You haven't been there in three months, yet you have a new menu card from the Park-Hopkins in your pocket! And what do you know! It's the menu for the tea-dance! . . . I arrest you, Mr. Richard Waters, alias J. Cartwright Hamilton, for the theft of the Phillips diamond.

THE STRANGER: You can't do this to me! I'm a respectable citizen, a prominent man. I'll sue the city for false arrest. This is the biggest mistake you've ever made, Inspector Anderson!

ANDERSON: You can tell me all about it on the trip back. Mr. Heyward and Miss Manners, you're free to go now.

MAX: Thanks, Inspector.

ANDERSON: Give your addresses to O'Malley. You'll have to testify.

HELEN: We'll be glad to do anything we can to help convict this—this monster!

ANDERSON: You've done a lot already, haven't you? In return, let me give you a word of advice. Don't accept gifts from strangers!

MAX: Don't worry, we've learned our lesson.

[Anderson and O'Malley, on either side of the still protesting Stranger, exit up the ramp at right stage. Max and Helen stand watching them.]

MAX: Do you realize it was almost you and I who went back with them to jail?

HELEN: You know, I'm a little sorry.

MAX: You mean you wanted to go to Teháchípi?

HELEN: No, silly. You'll have to get me another, Max. I need it for my collection.

MAX: What are you talking about?

HELEN: My menu-card from the Park-Hopkins. (*Sighing*.) I don't have it any more.

MAX: You mean—!

HELEN: I slipped it into his pocket. (*Giggling at the recollection.*) You looked so funny. You thought I was hysterical.

MAX: Was that when you did it?

HELEN: And no one saw me! Although I think perhaps Inspector Anderson knows. I don't care. I'm just sorry I lost my beautiful menu!

MAX: You're marvelous! Never mind, darling, we'll get you a dozen more on our honeymoon.

[*He leans down over her as the CURTAIN FALLS.*

THE GREAT MEATLOAF MYSTERY

By NANCY K. HOSKING

CHARACTERS

SUSAN, a colored maid

BETTY, about 11

DAVID, about 12

MRS. ATWOOD

MR. ATWOOD, the chief of police

DALY AND BRYAN, two policemen

JIM, BILL, PAUL AND TOM, four boys 10 to 12

GIRL REPORTER

Time: The action will take about twenty minutes.

Place: Any small city.

COSTUMES

The clothes are everyday ones. Mrs. Atwood wears street clothes, so does the reporter. The maid wears a maid's uniform and also needs a hat and coat. The children wear play clothes. Mr. Atwood wears a business suit and hat. The two policemen wear policemen's uniforms.

PROPERTIES AND LIGHTING

Kitchen furniture; a meatloaf; a loaf of bread; a bread-knife; lettuce; tomatoes; a bottle-opener; a picnic basket; a cake; a bottle of milk; a glass. Window shades for the kitchen door and window; roller skates; a towel; a hat-box; a door key; notebooks and pencils; doorbell and a police siren whistle.

Daylight.

SETTING

The scene is the kitchen of the Atwood home. There is a door at the left, leading outdoors, and one at the right, leading to the other part of the house. At the rear there is a window and a refrigerator. At the right there is a cupboard and at the left, a stove. At the center, front, is a kitchen table and two chairs. A hatrack stands near the door at the left. The refrigerator and the stove can both be made from large boxes, painted white with black trim.

THE PLAY

It is about 11 o'clock on a summer morning. As the curtain rises, Susan is standing at the kitchen table, icing a cake and humming to herself. She puts the finishing touches to the icing and steps back to admire her work. David and Betty enter left. David's clothes are disheveled and his face is dirty. He is carrying a pair of roller skates which he drops on the floor.

DAVID: Hi, Susan, where's Mother?

SUSAN: Yo' maw's at de telephone. An' don' yo' leave dem dirty skates on ma clean floor. Get 'em up off a dere, now! (David picks up the skates and drops them outside the kitchen door.)

BETTY: Mother! Mother! (She crosses to the door at the right.) Mother!

SUSAN: Don' yo' go botherin' yo' maw now. She's busy getting ready to take dis here cake down to de cake sale what de ladies am havin' at de church.

BETTY: I just want to ask her something. (To David.) You stay here.

[Betty goes out, right.]

DAVID: Don't we get any of this cake for supper? (He leans over the table and dips his finger in the icing that has dropped to the plate and licks it.)

SUSAN: Yo' get away from there, now! Yo' and yo' dirty fingers! 'Er de fust thing yo' know, yo' gonna be in trouble! (She gives David a little shove, and notices his disheveled condition for the first time.) Mmm-mm, looks like yo' an' trouble's already done met. (David shrugs his shoulders, scowls and turns away.) What's happened to yo', boy? Yo' fall down on dem rolly-skates?

DAVID: No, well, no. Not exactly.

enough so it doesn't mash. I'll have to be careful how I carry it. I've been trying to telephone Mrs. Jones to see if she'd stop by for me in her car, but our line's busy, so I guess I'll have to take the bus.

[Susan moves around the kitchen setting things to rights. Betty takes butter from the refrigerator to the cupboard shelf, gets out bread and breadknife and begins to slice the bread.

DAVID: Here's some meatloaf. Can we have some of that? Meatloaf makes swell sandwiches.

MRS. ATWOOD: Certainly not! Don't you dare touch that meatloaf! Susan made that for supper tonight, didn't you Susan?

SUSAN: Yassum, Mis' Atwood. I cooked it early 'fore I put de cake in de oven. I don' like to run de oven in the afternoon, dis kind of weather. Makes de kitchen too hot.

MRS. ATWOOD (*nods absently*): Just look around, you two. I'm sure you'll find enough. There's some cheese in that little jar, and some lettuce and tomatoes on the bottom shelf.

[David carries the cheese and lettuce and tomatoes over to the cupboard and Betty continues with the sandwiches. She packs them in a small basket.

DAVID: Don't forget a bottle-opener. (*Betty opens drawer of the cupboard and takes bottle-opener which she puts in the basket.*)

MRS. ATWOOD: Don't expect me back until late, Susan. I may be at the cake sale all day. (*She picks up the hat box and walks toward the door at the right. She stops to speak to David and Betty.*) Be sure you get back in time to clean up for supper. David! You're filthy! How in the world do you manage to get so dirty in such a short time!

[Betty nudges David but Mrs. Atwood doesn't notice. Betty picks up the basket and both children cross to the door at the left.

BETTY: Well, goodbye. (*She opens the door.*)

DAVID: 'Bye.

MRS. ATWOOD (*nods to children as they go out*): I hope they didn't make too much of a mess, Susan.

SUSAN: It won't take long to clean up. (*She begins cleaning up the clutter left by Betty from the sandwich-making.*) Mis' Atwood, ma'am, does yo' mind if I jus' steps down to see ma sister for a little while? She's been right poorly, lately, an' I would appreciate it if I could just go down for a little while and see how she comin' along. I won't stay long at all.

MRS. ATWOOD: Why, I guess it's all right, Susan. Mr. Atwood didn't telephone and that means he won't be coming home for lunch. Certainly, go right ahead. But I do wish you wouldn't stay very long. There have been so many robberies in the neighborhood lately that I don't like to leave the house with no one in it. It's those things which keep Mr. Atwood from having his luncheon in the house.

SUSAN: Yes, ma'am. But you don't need to worry none about anybody coming in dis house. Everybody know dat Mr. Atwood's de Chief of Police in dis town. Ain't nobody goin' to try an' rob dis house! Anyway I'll be back in a jiffy.

MRS. ATWOOD: Well, I certainly hope not. But please hurry back, anyway, Susan. I'll feel easier about it.

SUSAN: Yassum, Mis' Atwood. I will. Just you take a peep in an' come back.

MRS. ATWOOD: Goodbye, Susan, and thanks a lot for making the cake for me. (*She goes out, right, carrying the hatbox.*)

[*Susan moves about the kitchen, putting everything in its place. She takes her hat and coat from the hatrack, puts them on, then pulls down the kitchen window shades. Then she takes the key from the lock in the door, left, goes outside and closes the door. There is the sound of the key turning in the lock.*]

The half-darkened kitchen is quiet and empty for a few moments. Then there is the sound of a doorbell ringing. It rings again and again. There is silence for a little while and then the kitchen door knob is turned. There is another silence, followed by a noise at the window. Slowly the window is raised from the outside and the shade is pushed in toward the room as a man, wearing a hat, climbs through the window. He walks quietly through the kitchen, looking all around, then goes out at the door right. In a few moments he reenters the kitchen.

THE MAN (*grumbling*): It certainly is a deserted house. Ideal for an easy burglary. Gee! I'm hungry. I hardly had any breakfast! (*He goes to the refrigerator, opens the door and looks inside, then he takes a bottle of milk and the meatloaf, crosses to the cupboard, takes a knife and a glass from the shelf, slices the meatloaf and begins to eat it.*) There's a feast! (*He regards the food, then carries the meatloaf to the table, sits down on a chair and eats almost all of the meatloaf, leaves the plate and knife on the table, dusts off his hands.*) Gosh! That tasted good. (*He yawns and stretches.*) I could take a rest for

a few minutes. Looks as if this place'll be deserted for quite a time. (*He rises slowly and walks out slowly, right.*)

[*The kitchen is quiet again until there is the sound of the kitchen door being unlocked and Susan enters. She takes off her hat and coat and hangs them up, raises the window shades and stops in astonishment when she sees that the window is open. She looks out of the window and then turns back to the kitchen when she spots the nearly empty plate of meatloaf, then looks to the cupboard and sees the milk bottle.*

SUSAN: Mmmmm-mmmph! What's been goin' on 'round here! (*She looks all around the kitchen, goes out right and calls.*)

Mis' Atwood! Betty! David! Is you home? (*She returns to the kitchen and surveys the wreckage on the table.*) Something's been happening here sure enough, and I'll bet it's dem children. Mmm-mmmph! Jus' wait til their maw finds out!

[*Betty and David enter, left. Betty is carrying the basket, which she puts down on the table.*

BETTY: Hello, Susan.

DAVID: Hi—

SUSAN: Don' you hi and hello me! What for you wants to take dat meatloaf I made fo' supper? Yo' know yo' maw tol' yo' to let it alone! Why did you come back?

DAVID: We didn't take any meatloaf! Betty took the bottle-opener and forgot the coca cola and the salt.

SUSAN: Don't yo' tell me yo' didn't take it, when it's all gone an' et up like dat! An' climbin' in de window an' den goin' away and leavin' de window wide open when dey's robbers in de neighborhood!

BETTY: But we didn't, Susan, honestly we didn't! And we wouldn't have left the window open like that, would we David? Did you lock it when you went out?

SUSAN: Umph! Now don't yo' go blamin' me for not locking dat window! Maybe I did and maybe I didn't. I jus' don' remember! Anyhow I can't see to everything 'round dis house! Now jus' look at dat plate! They isn't anything on it but crumbs. Somebody done take dat meat loaf right out a ma refrigerator an' eat it every spec'. Dey done drink up de milk, too. I don' know who done it, but it's did.

DAVID: Robbers! Do you suppose it could have been a robber that did it?

BETTY: Robbers! Why it must be the same ones that got in that

house over on Cedar Avenue. Oh, golly, wait until Dad hears about this!

SUSAN: Robbers! In dis house? And dey come right here in ma kitchen? What kind a robber is dat what eats up folks' dinner? Lawsy me, ain't nobody safe nowhere if robbers can come right in the Chief o' Police house and eat his dinner! (*She scuttles around the kitchen, opening cupboard doors and looking behind chairs and under the table.*)

[*There is a sound of voices and of pounding feet at the door, left.*

JIM (offstage): David, oh, David! (*He whistles.*)

PAUL (offstage): Sure he's home. I just saw him go in.

TOM (offstage): Go on, you ask him. (*More noises outside and scuffling at the door.*)

DAVID: Oh, gee, that's the gang.

JIM (offstage): Hey, Dave!

DAVID (goes to the door, opens it and looks out): What you want?

JIM (*he comes to the door*): Come on out! The gang's going to play baseball over on the corner lot and we need you to come pitch for our side!

DAVID: Can't. I'm busy now.

JIM: Aw, come on. (*Jim comes into the kitchen and looks around.*) Whatcha so busy about?

SUSAN: Yo' better go on home, boy, we got trouble enough without you coming 'round buttin' in.

JIM: What do you mean trouble? Say, what's going on 'round here?

BETTY: David has to stay here with us because we think maybe a robber got in while we were all out, and Mother isn't home, or anything. I'm going right away and call up Daddy's office. (*She goes out, right.*)

SUSAN: Mmm-mph! Jus' wait til Mis' Atwood hears about dis!

JIM: Gee, a robber, honest? (*David nods and Susan clumps about, muttering.*)

JIM: Oh, gee, oh, gee. Wait until I tell the gang! (*He goes to the door at the left and calls.*) Hey, fellas! Come on here, quick! There's been a robber here! *Robbers!*

[*Paul, Tom, and Bill burst into the kitchen. They all talk at once.*

TOM: Robbers? What robbers?

PAUL: How did they get in?

TOM: Robbers! Good gosh! How do you know it was robbers?
BILL: Did you see them? Did they get away? Where's your mother?

BETTY (*she enters the kitchen, right*): Some policemen are coming right over. I tried to get Daddy but he wasn't in, so I talked to the desk sergeant and he said he'd send someone right away.

SUSAN: First robbers and then policemen! What nex' I ax' yo'!

JIM: Gee, cops are coming and everything! (*Jim and Tom rush to the window and look out.*)

DAVID: I wonder if he's still here, hiding someplace? The robber, I mean?

BETTY: Oh, no, David! (*She starts to cry.*) I wish Mother would come home!

BILL: What did the robbers take, anyhow? Over on Cedar Avenue they took all the dining-room silver!

SUSAN: Oh, Lawd! Lawd! Poor Mis' Atwood! Guess they took everything we got beginnin' with ma meat loaf.

PAUL (*begins to laugh*): Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! That's a good joke on you, Dave. (*There is the sound of the bell.*)

TOM: Here come the cops! (*Susan goes out right, to answer it.*)

DAVID: What do you mean?

PAUL: You think your father's so smart, and somebody came right in and stole stuff, right in his house! Ha-ha-ha!

DAVID: You want your face punched in again!

PAUL: Go on and try it! (*The boys begin to scuffle as the two policemen enter, followed by Susan.*)

DALY: Hey, what's going on here!

BRYAN: Looks more like a riot than a robber to me!

JIM: We're not doing anything.

SUSAN: Ain't we got enough trouble in dis house without yo' boys makin' some mo'? (*She rushes to the boys and pulls them apart.*) Yo' ought to be ashamed of yourselves!

PAUL: He started it!

DAVID: You shut up! (*He lunges at Paul again, and Paul hits back.*)

DALY (*goes over to boys and takes each one by a shoulder*): Now just what is this! (*The boys squirm and try to get away.*)

BETTY: David, oh, David, what will Mother say?

MRS. ATWOOD (*entering right*): What's all this noise about out here? Oh! What ever in the world! David! Betty! What is this!

DALY: Beg pardon, ma'am. We got a call to come out here to see about a robbery!

MRS. ATWOOD: A robbery here! Oh, no! But that's my son you have there! My son is not a thief!

DALY: No, ma'am! But it seems there was a fight, too. (*He lets the boys go and they sidle to a corner.*)

MRS. ATWOOD (*who has been too distracted to recognize him before*): Oh, you're Officer Daly, aren't you?

DALY: Yes ma'am. And this is Bryan, a police officer from Middletown. He is visiting us and he happened to be at the station when the call came. (*Bryan salutes and Mrs. Atwood nods to him.*)

MRS. ATWOOD: But what has happened! What is this about a robber, and what are all these boys doing here?

JIM: We aren't doing anything.

TOM: No, Mrs. Atwood, we just came in to get Dave.

BILL: We wanted him to play baseball with us, and then we heard about the robbery.

MRS. ATWOOD: But you two were fighting. (*She turns to Paul and David.*)

DAVID: Aw, that was something different.

PAUL: Yeah, something different!

DALY: All I know is that someone called up the station house and said there'd been a robbery out here. Mr. Atwood was away and the sergeant rushed us here. When we got here we found those two kids scrapping!

BETTY: I was the one who called the station house. I was trying to get Daddy to tell him about the robbery and he wasn't there, so they sent these policemen.

MRS. ATWOOD: A robbery! Here!

SUSAN: They's been robbers here, Mis' Atwood, sure enough.

DAVID: There wasn't anyone home, so the robbers got in.

TOM: Yeah, it was robbers, right here in this house!

PAUL: Maybe he stole all your jewelry!

DAVID: Mother, the robber ate up all the meat loaf!

BETTY: And Susan thought we did it but we didn't, that's how we know it was a robber!

MRS. ATWOOD: Oh, stop! Stop this shouting and tell me what happened!

DALY: That's what I'd like to find out, Mrs. Atwood. Can you tell us anything about this robbery? (*He takes out a notebook and pencil.*)

MRS. ATWOOD: But I really don't know anything! I came in after you did! Susan, you tell us exactly what happened.

SUSAN: I don't know nothing.

BETTY: But Susan, you do.

[The boys all speak together.]

DAVID: It was you who discovered the meat loaf was gone!

PAUL: You said there was a robbery here.

JIM: That's right.

BILL: Robbers right here in the Chief of Police's house! Can you beat that?

DALY: Never mind, boys, nobody's asking you. (*He turns to Mrs. Atwood.*) What time did you leave the house, Mrs. Atwood?

MRS. ATWOOD: Well, it must have been about noon. I went down to the cake sale and the children took a picnic lunch down to the creek. And Susan went to visit her sister, isn't that right, Susan?

SUSAN: Yassum, jus' like you say. But I wasn't gone long. I came right back. Ma sister wasn't home. She's gone to the doctor.

DALY: And then what happened?

SUSAN: When I come back that there window what I left shut is wide open and a whole meatloaf what I cooked for dinner was all et up. See that plate there? They ain't nothing but crumbs lef' on it—

[The boys crowd around to look at the plate and so do the policemen.]

DALY: Were you fellows around here then?

JIM: No sir. (*The others mumble.*) No, we weren't here.

PAUL: We just came in a minute ago, didn't we? (*He looks around at the others.*)

DALY: What else was taken?

BETTY: Oh, dear, we don't know. We haven't even been upstairs, and oh, Mother, my piggy bank is right on top of my dresser!

DALY: You'd better go upstairs and take a look around, Bryan.

BRYAN: O.K. (*He goes out right.*)

DALY: Did you boys see anybody around here today? Anybody suspicious?

JIM: No sir!

PAUL: No, we didn't see anybody.

TOM: We weren't even around here.

DALY: What about you, did you see anybody? (*This to Susan.*)
SUSAN: Naw, sir. I didn't see no one but de grocery boy.

MRS. ATWOOD: Oh, I wish Mr. Atwood were here! Betty when you telephoned the station house did they tell you when your father would be back?

BETTY: No, Mother, but they'll tell him to come right home, won't they?

DALY (*to Susan*): Were there any signs of disturbance? Did you notice anything wrong when you came back from your sister's?

SUSAN: Jus' dat window was open, and I know's I left it shut. And my meatloaf gone!

DALY: Were all the doors locked?

SUSAN: Yas suh!

[There is a sound of excited voices and thumping upstairs.]

BRYAN (*offstage*): None of that now. You come with me. Come on now and no nonsense! (*Bryan enters dragging the man who ate the meatloaf by the collar.*) Here he is, Daly. I caught him upstairs in one of the bedrooms.

MR. ATWOOD: I tell you I was just waking up from a nap! This is my house! (*He glares at Bryan.*)

BETTY and DAVID: Daddy, Daddy!

MRS. ATWOOD: Howard! How did you get upstairs!

DALY: Holy Lord! It's the chief!

MR. ATWOOD: What is all this about? What's wrong? Who are you?

BRYAN (*letting go Mr. Atwood very suddenly*): Oh, I'm sorry, sir! Daly sent me upstairs to look for the thief and when I saw you I er—I thought—I'm on a little visit to Officer Daly. He's my brother-in-law. I just came along . . . to help . . . in case. . . .

MR. ATWOOD (*growling*): Oh!

BRYAN: Yes, sir.

PAUL (*snickers*): He-he-he! Policeman arrests the Chief of Police!

DAVID (*advancing toward Paul*): Now you are going to get it!

MRS. ATWOOD: David!

SUSAN (*pushing David back and going toward boys*): You boys go on home! Go on now! (*She shoves them toward the door.*)

BILL: But we want to know what happened!

MR. ATWOOD: Go on, get out of here!

DALY: Go on, fellows, get going. I guess we won't need you any

more, now. (*The boys go out, left. Paul makes a face as he goes.*)

MR. ATWOOD: Now will someone please tell me what this is all about?

DAVID (*mutters*): Old Paul Mathews, I'm going to fix him, I am. He thinks he's funny!

MRS. ATWOOD: Howard! What were you doing upstairs this time of day?

MR. ATWOOD (*exasperated*): I was taking a nap, that's all. Can't a man lie down in his own house without the police force and the whole neighborhood being called in? (*The two policemen shuffle their feet.*)

DAVID: Did you see the robber?

MR. ATWOOD: What robber!

MRS. ATWOOD (*to David*): Shhh! (*To Mr. Atwood.*) But you never take naps, and what were you doing home anyway?

MR. ATWOOD: I came home for lunch!

MRS. ATWOOD: But why didn't you telephone?

MR. ATWOOD: Heaven knows I tried. I tried for one solid hour, but the blasted line was busy! And then when I got here I found there was no one home, and that I'd left my keys in my desk, so I pushed up that window (*points to window*) and climbed in. (*He turns to Susan.*) Susan, don't you know that window should be kept locked?

SUSAN: Um, um, yas suh. I must a forgot it.

MR. ATWOOD: Well, see that it doesn't happen again! Hrrrmph! Where was I? Oh, yes. What I want to know is, what's all this about a thief? There can't have been anyone in here or I'd have known it. I've been here ever since noon, got myself something to eat, some meat loaf and milk—must have eaten a bit too much because I got pretty sleepy and thought I'd lie down for a minute. And then I wake up to find myself collared by a member of the police force, and all this racket downstairs!

BETTY: You ate the meat loaf!

MR. ATWOOD: Is that what all this rumpus is about?

DAVID: Then there weren't any robbers!

MRS. ATWOOD (*sinking on a chair*): Oh, Howard!

MR. ATWOOD: So that's what all this is about, a meatloaf!

BETTY: Well, it was gone, and we didn't know who took it.

SUSAN (*mutters*): All my dinner done et up for lunch!

DALY: Will you be wanting us for anything more, chief?

MR. ATWOOD: I guess not, boys. And just soft pedal the whole thing down at the station, will you? Won't do any good to have it get around.

DALY: Oh, yes, sure.

BRYAN: I'm sorry, sir, about what happened. No hard feelings I hope?

MR. ATWOOD: Forget it. But after this better be sure you know what a police chief looks like.

BRYAN: Yes sir. It was just that I didn't expect to find you, and it was a bit dark upstairs. Goodbye sir. (*He salutes and nods at Mrs. Atwood and goes out.*)

DALY: Well, then we'll be going. (*He touches his cap in a small salute and goes out.*)

MR. ATWOOD: Well that's that! Now suppose you tell me the whole thing!

[*He sits down, mopping his face and twisting his neck and rubbing it. Betty and David go over to him.*]

DAVID: Did that cop hurt you?

MR. ATWOOD: Certainly not! Fellow has got a grip though! (*He stretches his neck again.*)

SUSAN: Mis' Atwood, ma'am. I dunno what I'se gwine hab fo' dinner. They ain't nothing left but eggs.

MR. ATWOOD: Eggs, after all this excitement. I should say not! I tell you what we'll do, we'll go downtown for supper.

[*The door bell rings and Susan goes out right.*]

MRS. ATWOOD: Oh, that will be lovely. Let's try that new place near the Bank.

BETTY: How about that restaurant where they have the orchestra? Oh, please, Daddy!

MR. ATWOOD: You two fix it up between you. But first, I want to know all about this robber business!

SUSAN (*reenters the kitchen, right*): They's a lady what wants to see you, Mist' Atwood. She say she's a reporter from de newspaper!

MR. ATWOOD: A reporter! (*He groans.*) Tell her I'm not at home. Tell her to go away!

REPORTER (*enters right with a notebook in her hand*): Oh, come now, Chief Atwood. I'm sure you'll want to give us your version of what happened.

MR. ATWOOD: What do you think you're talking about, young woman!

REPORTER: Well, we got a tip down at the office about the great

“Meatloaf Mystery” . . . that one of your own policemen had arrested you for robbery! Ha-ha! Now of course you’ll want to give us the story exactly as it happened.

MR. ATWOOD: Lord! (*Groans as the CURTAIN FALLS*

SHADOW-EEN

By EVANGELINE LYNCH

Won the "First Prize" in the Midwestern Writers Conference.
First produced in Chicago July 26, 1943

CHARACTERS

LARRY O'DAY, *village cut-up*
JULE, *his chiding sister*
MRS. O'DAY, *their mother, 'Mother Dear'*
TIM, *a learned lad*
SHAN, *a strolling fiddler*
SHADOW-EEN, *an eerie waif*

Time: One threatening night.

Place: A cottage in Ireland.

COSTUMES

All the characters are dressed in poor homespun-like modern clothes. They are all described by the author.

PROPERTIES

Large ball of yarn. Fuchsia or any other flowers available. Small ball of yarn. Lantern. A small bag filled with faggots. A small hawthorn stick, also a large stick. Switch. A long red-handled stick. Paint some paper boxes to look like turf. Simple statue of the Virgin. A vase with flowers.

LIGHTING

Throughout the play the scene is in semi-darkness. An eerie blue light would be best.

NOTES

The "mood" created by the actors and staging is of great importance in this play. Be careful to give the lines the proper cadences. The proper lighting will help greatly.

SETTING

A room in a wayside Irish cottage. Turf piled on either side of open fireplace, on the top of which is a statue of the Virgin and a vase of flowers. Rough wooden benches, tables, rag rugs, etc. In one corner is a small hawthorn stick, also a heavy stick and a switch. Behind the stove there is a long stick painted red.

THE PLAY

LARRY (*singing and jigging offstage in a happy-go-lucky fashion*): Crazy world—crazy tune—I'll be crazy too -do-do-did-did-did-did-doo -do- do-do. Crazy world! Cra. . . .

MOTHER (*seated in an armchair, back to audience. A motherly mother, dressed in homespun and wearing a hug-me-tight sweater. She is winding a large ball of gray yarn, impatiently*): Oh! Larry, m'lad, will you cease—that miserable tune—or you'll be a-driving me—crazy too.

LARRY (*entering and still jigging about*): Shure, Mother Dear, you ought be daft, and I'm thinking—distracted mad—from work. Work! Work! From the cock of the morn till evening (*grandiloquently*) pins her curtain with a silver star—and o'er—

MOTHER: Larry now, a little less poetic nonsense—and a little more service. (*She accidentally drops the ball of yarn.*)

LARRY (*he picks it up gallantly and winds it*): Now, my Darling Duchess, knowest thou, that I'm the best yarn winder in these parts?

MOTHER: Yarn-spinner, you mean. Larry, you're the play-actor all right, all right!

LARRY: Then, by the same token, I'll cast you—as me leading lady, The Grand Duchess (*laughingly, as he pins a fuchsia on her*) only the pity of it—you're me Flower Girl.

MOTHER: Larry, I do declare! You're the tantalizing tease! In one and the same breath—one could chide and hug you.

LARRY: Shure, that's why you wear a hug-me-tight. (*He hugs her affectionately.*)

MOTHER: Off with ye now! And give a wind to this bit of color. (*She gives him a small ball of red yarn.*)

LARRY (*winding it*): Mother Dear, have you ever given it a thought that t'would be an iligent idea that Adam, who started work, should finish it? And did you ever realize—'tis only jackasses like to work—and even they turn their backs to it!

MOTHER: Do be stopping your ceaseless chatter. It's the truth I'm a-telling you. M'lad, you're like—the running brook. I often wonder why you chatter so incessantly—so I do.

LARRY: To prevent others from saying stupid things.

MOTHER (*laughing*): M'lad, you're always ready, with the repartee. And, when it comes to teasing—as I've often said—you're a chip off the old block.

LARRY: Shure, a chip off the old block, am I?

MOTHER: It's the truth I'm a-telling you, Larry O'Day! Your poor dead father (*reverently*) may God rest his soul—was an artist; when it comes to teasing—only he knew his limitations.

LARRY: Knew his limitations? Now, what do you mean, Mother Dear?

MOTHER: 'Tis well you know what I mean. He never teased poor unfortunates.

LARRY: Poor unfortunates?

MOTHER: I have in mind that forlorn childing—that little eerie waif, Shadow-een, bless his wee heart.

LARRY: Shadow-een! Shure, I wouldn't be harmin' a hair o' his head. But, somehow his elfish pranks amuse me.

MOTHER: Amuse you! Instead, you should thank God and His Blessed Mother that you have the sound use of your senses.

LARRY: Arrah, Mother Dear, you're after takin' me too serious like. Why, Shadow-een—the fantastic little elf, has more fun than if he had his sound mind.

MOTHER: Keep it up! Keep it up, m'lad, and mark my word, the time will come when you'll rue the day, and then you'll remem—

JULE (*outside*): Mother Dear! Mother Dear! Will you open the door, please!

MOTHER: Larry! Open the door. 'Tis Jule—what's the word, m'child?

JULE (*enters, enveloped in a greenish-grey hooded cloak, lined*

in orange; her arms filled with hawthorn bloom): 'Tis mournful news, Mother Dear. On the way home from town, as I neared Widow Malone's, I heard loud lamentations and, just at the gate, I met the Reverend Father, and says he "Widow Malone is gravely ill."

MOTHER: Gravely ill? Poor dear soul! May God spare her! I must go at once. (*Drops her work.*) Larry, please to light the holy candle and we'll say a Pater'n Ave—for her speedy recovery.

LARRY: Or happy death! (*Crossing himself, as his mother places the lighted candle near the statue of the Virgin, and looking out of the window.*) Oh! and this would be a wild night for a heavenly flight!

JULE: I don't like that moaning wind *—that was hid in the hills and is now breaking from the West. Somehow, it seems like a strange power abroad.

LARRY: I'm after thinking, 'tis like the night of the Big Wind. (*Turning round quickly.*) Mother Dear, you're not thinking of braving this wild night?

MOTHER: Nothing could keep me!

JULE: Do you hear the doleful sound? The moaning through the dead trees?

LARRY: 'Tis a forbidding wind.

MOTHER: Wind or no wind—I'm going to Widow Malone's. The four winds of Heaven couldn't prevent me!

LARRY: Well, if you're that determined, let me go with you—at least to the turning of the road.

MOTHER: Stop in with Jule.

JULE: Somehow, I think Larry's right. Mother Dear, I don't cherish the thought of having you out alone, especially on the return home.

MOTHER: Never a care! Who would harm an old woman? But, to still your fears, I'll take along with me—my protector..

LARRY: Your protector?

MOTHER: Yes, my shawl. My great shawl.

JULE: The one with the red fringe?

MOTHER: Yes, that's the one. Larry, would you give it here?

LARRY (*putting the shawl over his head dramatically and walking about spookily*): Hamlet's father's ghost! Re-mem-ber me!

* The wind can be produced by a wind machine; or an individual varying "co" sound or records.

MOTHER: Give it here! This is no time for play-acting. Well, my dears, I'll be off. (*Prayerfully and glancing back.*) God be with you.

[*She goes out. The wind can be heard howling wildly outside.*

JULE: I do wish Mother didn't go. Listen to that gloomy wind! It seems—like a grim warning—

LARRY: And isn't it indescribably sad? Do you hear that creaking?

JULE: 'Tis the creaking of the Bridge of the Seven Arches.

LARRY: If my ears can be trusted, a cart is approaching. It's stopped! It's gone on—no—there, it's stopped again. Do you hear footsteps a-coming up the path? 'Tis Tim himself—I can tell by the click of his boots.

JULE (*as she opens the door*): Tim! A gift of the wind. Now, what brought you out this tempestuous night?

TIM (*enters*): I promised you that poem. And, Jule, you're the only one who could make me brave the winds (*laughing*) but—if the truth be known—Shan gave me a lift.

JULE: Shan, the fiddler? Why didn't he run in? Myself was wishful he'd come along.

TIM: In a jiffy, he'll be in.

JULE: And what's his delay?

TIM: He's spreading blankets on Dolly Gray. By the way, whom do you suppose we're after seeing—at the fall of the darkness—coming over the rise of the hill and hovering in the shadows of the old Abbey?

JULE: Could it be Shadow-een you were seeing?

TIM: Yes—about two hours back; Shan and myself took great delight in watching the wee Shadow-een.

JULE: And what was he doing?

TIM: You might know—playing hide and seek among the leafy shadows. And, as he was gathering faggots, he was a-singing an enchanting tune.

JULE: An enchanting tune? And did you get the words?

TIM: Shan caught them, with his musical ear. He said the refrain was:

Hush-een Shadow-een! Shadow-een Hush-een!
To the fairyland far
Where the Little People are.

JULE: Hush-een? Why, 'tis his own wee lullaby, and means much if one would listen with the heart. If he weren't such an intangible will-o'-the-wisp, we'd love to give the waif a home, but faith nobody's childing!

LARRY: Shure, he's the fantastic lad. Isn't he the weirdest one-teen? At times, he seems like a fairy—in the form of a boy—sort of a leprechaun! And how I love to be a-teasing him!

JULE: And it's many a time and oft, Mother Dear told you 'tis dangerous to be a-teasing the innocent lad.

TIM: And innocent lad he is! Why, only yesterday I saw the elf a-piping a fantastic tune on a broken reed—and dancing among the leafy shadows of the glen. You'd think he was Pan himself!

LARRY: And isn't it odd how he loves little shadows, and the great fear and hatred he holds for the big shadows?

JULE: There are times I think shadows and shadowy forms mean much to him. Faith, far more than we'll ever know!

LARRY: Hasn't he the strangest little laugh? It sounds almost like the babbling of the brook; but, queerest of all, are his searching eyes!

JULE: I do be thinking he sees more than you or I with those searching eyes.

TIM: What fascinates me is the wavering tones of his chililing voice. They're sort of will-o-the wispy.

JULE: As the Bard of Avon describes fair Ophelia—"Sweet bells, jangled out of tune."

TIM: That fits it—"Sweet bells, jangled out of tune"—

SHAN (*concealing Shadow-een suddenly bursts in. He is wearing a big rain cape, thrown over his head and shoulders. With one hand he holds an old lighted lantern. The other hand is extended beseechingly. He is pretending to be a beggar*): Ha-penny! Ha-penny! Please drop a ha-penny—

JULE: 'Tis Shan himself! You funny man! What tricks are you up to? Now, what's this you're a-hiding?

SHAN: That's my fiddle—and my riddle!

TIM: I can guess the riddle.

SHADOW-EEN (*a young boy, barefooted, jumps out from behind Shan. He is dressed in tattered brown clothes and a red cap. Around his neck he wears a wreath of leaves. He holds a small basket in his hand. For a moment he looks wistfully about and then weirdly flits around in a fantastic dance*): A riddle! A riddle! Yes! I've a wee riddle. Don't you tell, Shan!

LARRY (*whirling about little Shadow-een*): Tell me your riddle! Tell me your wee riddle!

SHADOW-EEN: What is it that purrs and purrs and purrs?

LARRY: A dog. Bow! Wow! Wow! (*Walking on all fours.*)

SHADOW-EEN: No! It's not a dog. What is it that says meow?

LARRY: A donkey. Heehaw! Heehaw! (*Making big ears, by extending his hands at the sides of head.*)

SHADOW-EEN: What is it that purrs—and purrs and meows—and purrs and meows and chases little mice?

LARRY: A billy-goat. Ba-ah! I guessed it!

SHADOW-EEN (*gleefully*): No! 'Tis a cat—a tabby cat!

LARRY: Jule doesn't like tabby cats.

JULE: I do like tabby cats. 'Tis the Widow Malone's black cat I dislike. They bring no good luck.

LARRY: And what do you be having in your wee basket?

SHADOW-EEN: Look and see—'tis for thee.

LARRY: Why, as shure as there are two eyes in my head—here are two blackbirds—and both are dead. Why did you bring them to me?

SHADOW-EEN: 'Cause you told me to strike two blackbirds with one stone.

LARRY: And when did I tell you that?

SHADOW-EEN: Down in the hidden hills, last night, at the first turning—and I was playing with my little shadows, down near the glen.

LARRY: And just what did I say?

SHADOW-EEN: You picked up a big stone and then you gave it to me. You said "Why don't you play with the blackbirds?" And I told you "I like the pretty colored birds but not blackbirds."

LARRY: And then, what did I say?

SHADOW-EEN: "Take that stone and with it you can strike two birds." So, just in a little minute, after you went away, I threw the big stone and then two blackbirds-fell-right-down—dead!

LARRY: I was only making a little fun—you mustn't mind me.

SHADOW-EEN (*nodding his head*): I always mind you. I do what you tell me. So I do. I do.

JULE: Larry, will you ever be getting an ounce of sense? Don't you see how he carries out all your foolish suggestions?

LARRY: Jule, you're indeed a jewel! If any lad has a grander sister, I've yet to meet him.

JULE: And no one such a palavering brother! (*Then, turning to Shadow-een.*) Don't you like blackbirds?

SHADOW-EEN: No, I do not like blackbirds.

LARRY: And, why not?

SHADOW-EEN: Once—oh! a long, long time ago—I was down near the glen and I was so tired I went fast asleep under a slumber tree and, while I was sleeping, what do you suppose happened?

LARRY: I never could guess.

SHADOW-EEN: Well, then I'll tell you. A bird—a blackbird—flew right into my ear and he never, never came out again.

LARRY: He never came out again?

SHADOW-EEN: No! He stayed right up there in the tippy-top of my head.

LARRY: You mean . . . you had a dream . . . a bird dream?

SHADOW-EEN: No! No! No! It was no bird dream. It was a real-ly dream. The blackbird is up here now. I can feel it. It hums and hums—just like a humming bird!

LARRY: Enough of the old blackbirds! Let's hide them out there under the bushes.

SHADOW-EEN: Whatever you say, Larry. (*He walks toward exit with basket.*)

LARRY: And why do you wear that funny red cap? It makes you look like a leprechaun!

SHADOW-EEN: I wear it 'cause I like red—better than any color in—(*He and Larry exit.*)

TIM (*glancing after them, sympathetically*): 'Tis a pity—a pity! The lad's malady is a mental malady—sort of an obsession.

JULE (*puzzled*): An obsession? And is there no cure?

TIM (*reflectively*): The cure is to release the obsession—and that's a case for an expert.

JULE: And wouldn't that be the blessed cure!

TIM (*sentimentally*): Shure—others have obsessions, too—and mine's for you.

JULE (*shyly*): And what are you a-trying to say?

TIM: If only my heart could speak, your true love t'would seek; for, as I've often said before, you're the only one I adore.

JULE: Love's blind to the real—which is far from ideal.

TIM: For the sake of romance—let's both take a chance.

JULE: Tim, you've the silvery tongue—but now I'm thinking of that Larry. Isn't he the incorrigible?

TIM (*defending Larry*): Incorrigible? Shure, Larry means no harm.

JULE: Harm nor no harm—you know 'tis dangerous to tease and torment that queer lad. He takes him seriously. He killed

the poor blackbirds because Larry told him to do it, in jest.
 TIM: You're right Jule. Larry doesn't mean it, but he shouldn't say these things to a lad like him.

JULE (*intensely*): Tim, will you do me a favor?

TIM (*laughingly*): Well, that will depend.

JULE (*continuing in same grim mood*): Don't defend Larry! Are you aware 'tis a family affair?

TIM (*apologetically*): I declare of that I'm well aware. But Jule, I'd no mind to offend. So—I'd better have less to say—and be on m'way.

[*He starts to take his hat and go towards the door, as Larry and Shadow-een return. The latter has a small bag in his hand.*

LARRY (*jovially*): Well! we're rid of the departed birds.

JULE (*reprovingly*): With the prayerful wish that your teasing jokes departed with them.

SHADOW-EEN (*seeing Tim start to go—coaxingly*): Tim! don't go away! Stay—and Shan will play. (*To Jule, appealingly.*) Jule, tell Tim to stay.

JULE (*with wounded dignity*): I've nothing to say.

LARRY: Shure, what's gone wrong, whilst we were gone? Didn't the lovers get along?

JULE: Do be still!

SHADOW-EEN (*pulling Jule with one hand and Tim with the other, chants*): Jule's mad and Tim is sad—and I know how to tease them. (*Whispers to Larry, and both chuckle. He pulls the poem out of Tim's pocket and holds it up high.*) Here, Larry! You read it—

LARRY (*melodramatically reading*): Jule! my precious jewel! For you I'd fight many a duel.

SHADOW-EEN: A duell! What's a duell? (*All laugh. Shadow-een claps and sings triumphantly.*) Now Jule's glad—and Tim is glad—and we know how to please them.

TIM (*laughing*): Will you look at Shan, enjoying a snooze? (*Understandingly.*) Being housed in has little charm for him. Shan was born to feel the springing green under his feet.

JULE: And the same holds for Shadow-een. (*Looking in Shadow-een's direction.*) Don't you love to feel of the grass, under your wee toes?

SHADOW-EEN: Yes, my wee toes do love the feel of the grass, and the little leaves too. See, here's a chain of leaves I made for your mother. (*Takes it from his neck.*)

JULE: Let's decorate her chair with it—(*as she places the wreath on the arm of her mother's chair*) there!

SHADOW-EEN: And here's a bundle of wee faggots. (*Presenting Jule with them.*)

JULE (*in a whisper*): And now, you surprise them with your Dance of the Little Shadows.

SHADOW-EEN (*nodding approval*): Shust! Shust! Be still! (*Scattering leaves.*) On tiptoe—or you'll awaken—all my little playmates, so far away in the fairy glen . . . (*Emptying the bag of faggots.*) Shust! these are wee fairy trees I gathered for thee, Juley. The winds, this wild night, chased me and tried to steal my wee faggots—but I ran faster than the winds—and now, little fire, you may have all my faggots, if you'll give me—little shadows. (*Clapping his hands.*) Oh! I love—my little shadows. I don't like big shadows—I love my little shadows. Where's my dancing stick? (*Clapping his hands, and chuckling elfishly, he takes the little hawthorn stick.*) Now, I'll go—

To the Fairyland far
 Where the Little People are
 Ho! Ho! Ho!—Hush-Oh!
 Ee-Ee-Ee- Hush-een!
 Come, my shadows—come with me.
 Follow me up there, so high
 Now down, down, down below, so green.
 Are you tired, wee shadows?
 Shadow-een is tired too—oo—oo (*falls exhausted on stool near fire—whispering low.*)
 Hush-een! Shadow-een—een!
 Shadow-een—Hush-een—Hush-een.

JULE: Shan! Couldn't you set up a bit of a tune—for Shadow-een's "Hush-een Dance"?

SHAN: A mind-reader you are! Just such a tune was going through my head. Here's the mood: (*He plays softly a piping air and sways to the rhythm.*) It's merry—and sad—with a bit of magic—if your heart listens to its haunting strains.

LARRY: Shure, we've had enough of the shadows—now let's be having a Big Shadow Dance. (*He dances around vigorously with Shan's cape.*) Shure 'tis a real dance.

JULE: Larry, go easy! You carry your nonsense too far. Your wild antics are exciting the lad!

LARRY: Shadow-een! don't you like my Big Shadow Dance?

SHADOW-EEN: No, I don't. Go away, big black shadow! I don't like big shadows. My little shadows are afeard of big shadows.

LARRY: Shadows are not real. Big shadows can never harm little shadows.

SHADOW-EEN: Shadows are real! Real things move! Shadows move! Big shadows move too! Yes, big shadows are real. Little shadows are afeard of big shadows. I must shield my little friends. Shust! do you hear the call—the call of the Banshee?

LARRY: Arrah! that's the wind—moaning.

SHADOW-EEN: No, that's the wail of the Banshee, in yonder glen. I must go! Where's my night stick?

LARRY: Here's your night stick. 'Twill protect you against the Big Shadow, The Big Ghost.

SHADOW-EEN (*ominously*): The Big Shadow? The Big Ghost?

LARRY (*over-play-acting*): Don't you know that every night about this time a big shadow, a big ghost, goes stalking about in the darkness of the night—like this. (*Spookily pantomiming.*) And that ghost goes prowling about, chasing little shadows. 'Tis said the whole country 'round is terrified by the Big Shadow, the Big Ghost.

SHADOW-EEN (*weird chuckle*): I'm not afraid of the Big Shadow, the Big Ghost—I have my night stick.

LARRY: Shure—'tis almost a Shillalah! Give it here. You must not carry it. (*Takes the stick from him.*)

SHADOW-EEN: No! you can't have my stick. Give it to me—I must go. (*Enraged.*) If you don't give me my stick, I'll throw this turf at you.

LARRY: Put down that turf!

SHADOW-EEN (*throwing it in the fire*): I'll not put it down—I'll throw it in the fire! I'll throw all the turf in the fire, if you don't give me my stick.

LARRY: Here—take this old switch. 'Twould be a fine weapon.

SHADOW-EEN: No! No! I'm no witch. I don't like switches. Give me my stick or—I'll kick hard.

JULE: Do give the lad his stick.

SHADOW-EEN (*discovering a long red handle extending from behind the turf*): Give me my stick or I'll take this big red stick—I like red sticks.

LARRY (*dynamically*): Lay off, lad! That's the handle of the old ax. Here's your night stick. Now, be off! In case the Big Shadow, the Big Ghost, crosses your path, you can strike it down—like this!

SHADOW-EEN (*assuming super-strength, imitates Larry's strike-gestures*): Strike it down! Strike down the Big Shadow. (*Repeats the striking.*) Now I must go—I must go. The wind says so, so, so! Oh! I forgot my red cap—(*as he reaches for it, he stealthily pulls out the red handle—unbeknownst to the others—and tiptoeing, exits triumphantly.*)
 [The wind howls fiercely.]

JULE: I shudder to think of the likes of the laddie out in this treacherous night—but, somehow, he had no fears of the night.

TIM: 'Twas the red color that attracted him. But, now that he's gone, let's have a bit of a jig. Shan, strike up a tune.

LARRY (*going out*): I'll return soon.

SHAN: Wait a second and I'll be ready in a minute, when I've tuned up my fiddle, and I'll get hay for Dolly Gray. In the meantime, Tim, you and your fair Jul—iet can engage in a learned conversation.

JULE: I'm in no conversational mood—learned or otherwise.

SHAN: Tim, what's in the air, that makes Jule act so quare? (*He goes out laughing.*)

TIM (*shouting after him*): If you speak poetry, I can well match ye. Whilst you were having a doze, a little difference arose.

JULE: A little difference was it, that started you to go? 'Tis well you know—'twas a big difference; 'twas a family affair.

TIM: I'm well aware 'twas a family affair.

JULE: Suppose 'twas a little difference—to be seen a-dancing on the green with a strange lass.

TIM (*with ecstasy*): Strange lass! None other than the niece of the Lord Mayor. And how she could chant poems—as they do, at Oxford!

JULE (*tinge of jealousy*): And trip "The Light Fantastic" to "The Wearing of the Green."

TIM: And how about you, yourself, going to the Fair, with that lad with the London air?

JULE: He doesn't laugh as balmy as the lass on the green.

TIM: Nor does she try to high-hat every—

JULE: Is it a bit jealous you are?

TIM: Who would be jealous of one so lacking in wit?

JULE: They can't all be learned lads!

TIM: Nor learned ladies!

JULE: Nor struggling poets—who never published a poem.

TIM (*lifting Jule's cape*): Nor wear a cape—lined in orange!

TIM: Nor a tie—fit for the dead.

TIM: The lass who sold me this tie bows each tie for the lad who buys.

JULE: Suppose she tied yours—in a lover's knot!

TIM: Whether lover's knot or beau's knot—she's one grand lass!

JULE: If she's so grand, why don't you make her grander—(*taking off her ring*) with this ring?

TIM: Jule, as I've told you before, you're the only one I adore.

JULE: I'm not! I'm not!

TIM: You are!

JULE: You certainly don't adore me.

TIM: I do! I do!

JULE: You don't.

TIM: I don't, don't I?

JULE: No—you don't!

TIM: No—you don't!

JULE: Don't what?

TIM: Don't believe me.

JULE: Why should I?

TIM: Why shouldn't you?

JULE (*in hurt silence*): You're as whimsical as—

TIM: As whimsical as—

[*Larry and Shan enter.*

LARRY: As the wind.

SHAN (*lighting his pipe and speaking to Tim*): Put that in your pipe and smoke it.

TIM (*laughing*): You smoke it for me.

LARRY: Shan, how about a little fiddling—to settle the discord?

SHAN: Shure, me old fiddle will be the harmonizer; but whilst I'm a-tuning it up, Tim, how about that bit of a poem you brought along for Jule?

TIM (*fumbling in his pocket*): Now, where is it? I wrote it on the back of an old almanac . . . Here, you read it, Shan.

SHAN: Man alive, no! I'd spoil it—for Jule. A poet should render his own magic.

TIM: I don't know about magic—but here's how it goes:

Out for a stroll one day
Somewhat depressed I seemed
For from the sky no ray
From Apollo beamed.

Just as this thot me took
My ear guided my eye to look

To where a lone child fair
Sang an angelic air!

[*Shan has drowsed off.*]

JULE: And what was the angelic air?

TIM: Shure, I wrote it on the back of a colleen's picture, and I must have left it in my other coat. I'll run over with it sometime tomorrow.

LARRY: Are you sure you didn't forget it on purpose?

JULE: Larry, do be still.

LARRY: I'm after thinking—you wouldn't be a bad addition to the family, Tim.

JULE: Hush, now! Let's change the subject and dance a bit.

TIM (*as he steals a glance at Jule*): Are you ready, Shan?
(*Awakening him.*)

SHAN (*yawning*): You've talked the fire low! Shure, and I'd rather be fiddling a wedding dance. But—for the time being —let's start a jig.

TIM: Come on, Jule! My feet won't keep still. (*Suddenly.*) But, why has the fiddling stopped?

SHAN (*in deep reverie*): I'm thinking the likes of you two would rather be shut up within four walls, reciting poetry and philosophizing—whilst the likes of myself would rather be listening to the crickets lifting their wee voices against the wild winds, and setting their moods to the strains of this old fiddle of mine (*crooning*) "My Dark Rosaleen, do not sigh, do not weep."

TIM: "My Dark Rosaleen"—I love the Celtic cadence, "do not sigh, do not weep."

JULE: You're the dreamy fiddler all right.

SHAN: 'Twas a lovely dream, and I'm the richer for it.

TIM: But, how about our reel? Come on, Larry, let's make it a three-handed reel.

[*They all join in merrily.*

In the midst of the dance, a shrill scream is heard in the distance, and they all suddenly stop, spellbound, as Jule rushes to the window . . . The door bursts open and Shadow-een enters and cries heroically.

SHADOW-EEN: I struck it down! I struck it down!

JULE (*apprehensively*): What did you strike down?

SHADOW-EEN: The Big Shadow! The Big Ghost!

ALL: Sha . . . ! Shadow! Ghost! "The Big Ghost! !!"

SHADOW-EEN: Yes, The Big Shadow, The Big Ghost (*pointing*

to Larry), you said "strike it down." So I did—strike it down!

LARRY: Where was it?

SHADOW-EEN: At the gate of the Abbey.

LARRY: Which gate?

SHADOW-EEN: Near Widow Malone's.

JULE: Mother of God! Who could it be? who could—

SHADOW-EEN (*swinging the great shawl with the red fringe*):
Here's the shawl. Here's the Ghost's shawl!

LARRY: Heavenly Father! 'Tis Mother's shawl!

JULE: Mother's? Moth-Mother's! !!!

[*All rush out except Shadow-een who walks and trips about unconcernedly.*

JULE (*outside*): Thank God! She is not hurt seriously. . . .

SHAN: She's just stunned.

JULE: It's your fault, Larry. I told you not to tease Shadow-
een . . . not to be suggesting things. . . .

LARRY: I never dreamt he'd take it seriously.

TIM: To children and those who have young minds you must
never suggest harmful things.

LARRY: I'll not, I'll not. Carry her carefully. The Lord be
blessed. She's talking.

JULE: And she is saying Shadow-een shouted, "Larry told me,
Larry told me."

[*Shadow-een listens puzzled.*

LARRY: I'll never tell him to do such things.

SHADOW-EEN (*laughing and dancing*): If Larry says I'll not,
then I'll not. If Larry says I'll not, then I'll not.

[*The CURTAIN CLOSES as Tim and Shan are seen backing
in carrying someone.*

IT'S ABOUT TIME

By ALBERT CARRIÈRE

THOSE IN THE PLAY

PROFESSOR LEARNED

MRS. LEARNED, *his wife*

STELLA, *their maid*

JANE TRAVERS, *a young woman*

JACK DODGE, *an inventor*

THE VOICE OF NAPOLEON

THE VOICE OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

THE VOICE OF PERICLES

THE VOICE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

THE VOICE OF HANNIBAL

Time: The play should take about thirty to thirty-five minutes.

Place: Any small college in the country.

COSTUMES AND PROPERTIES

The costumes are all modern.

The properties required are: Coffee set. Living room furniture. Newspaper. Envelopes. Books. Suitcase and boxes. Tray for coffee service. Tortoise-shell glasses. Big suit case, which must contain many radio parts and one small radio. When set out the thing must look both mysterious and impressive. Several small boxes. An imitation pistol.

LIGHTING AND NOTES

It requires ordinary lighting.

The series of static sounds can be imitated on stage with a real radio dialed in such a manner to produce the sounds, or they can be reproduced at the proper moment on a record

which can be bought at small expense in a good gramophone shop. It will also be found in places where theatrical accessories are sold.

The voices of various historical characters can be imitated by a boy who can change the tones of his voice. Of course, if you wish you can have several do it.

SETTING

The living room of Professor Learned. Furnish it with any furniture you are able to get. It should have pictures, of course.

THE PLAY

The living room of the Learned home. Professor Learned and his wife are settling down for the evening. Stella, the maid, enters from the door, left, carrying a tray on which is a silver coffee service. Professor Learned sits in a comfortable arm-chair, right. He is reading a newspaper. Mrs. Learned sits at a desk, left. She is addressing envelopes. Stella pours a cup of coffee for Mrs. Learned, sets it down, then goes over to where Professor Learned sits, serves him.

PROFESSOR (*grunts as he reads a news item*): Really! I don't know how people can be so stupid!

MRS. LEARNED (*stops her writing*): What's the trouble?

PROFESSOR: Here's a woman who gave her life savings to a gypsy.

STELLA: A gypsy? Mercy!

MRS. LEARNED (*pleasantly*): Well, perhaps she owed him money.

PROFESSOR: No, no! You don't understand. This gypsy promised to double her money in twenty-four hours.

STELLA: Double it?

PROFESSOR: Yes, double it. (*He shakes his head.*) How can anybody be stupid enough to fall for that old trick?

MRS. LEARNED: What happened, Alfred?

PROFESSOR: Well, she gave the man her life savings, and of course he disappeared.

STELLA: And did he take the money with him? Her money?

PROFESSOR: You don't think he'd leave it behind, do you?

STELLA: I don't know, Professor.

PROFESSOR (*disgusted*): Ah!

MRS. LEARNED: My husband means, Stella, that the man stole the money.

STELLA: He did?

MRS. LEARNED: Yes.

STELLA: Then he was a thief, and I hope they catch him.

MRS. LEARNED: Perhaps they will.

STELLA: It's simply awful the things that go on nowadays, really, I mean.

PROFESSOR (*impatiently*): If people would only stop to think.

STELLA: Think, Professor?

PROFESSOR: Yes, think! (*He taps his forehead.*) This marvelous instrument with which nature has endowed us, that's what it's for: thinking!

STELLA: Oh, I see. You mean the brain?

PROFESSOR: Yes, the brain! (*Disgusted, he returns to his paper.*) Ah!

STELLA: Oh. (*She turns to Mrs. Learned.*) Will that be all, M'am?

MRS. LEARNED: I think so, Stella.

STELLA: Good night, M'am. (*She starts out.*) Good night, Professor.

MRS. LEARNED: Good night, Stella.

PROFESSOR: Ah! (*He buries himself in his paper.*)
[Exit Stella, taking the coffee service with her.

MRS. LEARNED: Is something troubling you, Alfred? You look rather disturbed.

PROFESSOR: That girl!

MRS. LEARNED: Stella? What about her?

PROFESSOR: Why does she ask such stupid questions?

MRS. LEARNED: Oh, I don't think her questions are stupid; they may be obvious, but not stupid.

PROFESSOR: Any child could answer the questions that Stella asks.

MRS. LEARNED: Alfred, you must be more patient with her. Stella is a good maid, and, remember, we are lucky to have her.

PROFESSOR: I suppose so, but why must she ask such obvious questions?

MRS. LEARNED (*smiling*): Because some people are obvious. Not everyone can be like my husband, a brilliant professor of history at a large university.

PROFESSOR: Oh, bother! I didn't mean that.

MRS. LEARNED: Didn't you?

PROFESSOR: No. I was merely remarking on the inability of most people to do a bit of simple thinking.

MRS. LEARNED: Well, I shouldn't let that worry me.

PROFESSOR (*watches Mrs. Learned for a moment as she continues to address envelopes*): What are you doing?

MRS. LEARNED: I'm addressing envelopes for the church. In about five minutes I'm going to mail these letters. Like to come for a walk?

PROFESSOR: Oh, no thanks. I'll stay here and finish reading the paper.

[*The doorbell rings.*

MRS. LEARNED: Were you expecting any one?

PROFESSOR: I don't think so. I wonder who that can be?

MRS. LEARNED: It's probably one of your students.

PROFESSOR: At this hour?

MRS. LEARNED: Why not?

PROFESSOR: Confound it! They know I don't like to be disturbed when I'm reading my evening paper.

MRS. LEARNED: Well, perhaps it isn't a student; perhaps it's a gypsy who wants to borrow your life savings.

PROFESSOR: Huh! If it's a gypsy, he'd better run! Life savings indeed!

MRS. LEARNED: Don't you think there must be something rather colorful and persuasive about a person who could talk you out of your life savings?

PROFESSOR: There's not a soul on this earth could talk me out of my savings!

MRS. LEARNED: You sound very sure of yourself, Alfred.

PROFESSOR: I'm sure of that.

[*Stella enters.*

STELLA: Excuse me, Professor. A student to see you. A Miss Travers.

PROFESSOR: Miss Travers? I don't seem to recall a Miss Travers in any of my classes.

MRS. LEARNED: Well, you are absent-minded, Alfred. Perhaps you've forgotten her name.

PROFESSOR: Of course not! How could I?

STELLA: She says it's awfully important.

PROFESSOR: Oh, show her in then. (*Stella leaves.*) Travers? I can't remember any Travers.

MRS. LEARNED: Never mind.

PROFESSOR: But I never forget names. Only last week I met a student I had three years ago, and I recognized him at once. His name was . . . er . . . Smith . . . no, it was Brown . . . er . . . Well, I knew him instantly.

STELLA (*as she enters with Jane Travers*): Miss Travers. (*Professor rises*.)

JANE (*A young woman attractively dressed. She wears tortoise-shell glasses, and carries an armful of books*): Good evening, Professor.

PROFESSOR (*bows*): Miss Travers. (*Stella leaves*.)

JANE: I'm sorry to bother you at this hour, but I simply had to see you.

PROFESSOR: I see. Oh, Miss Travers, my wife, Mrs. Learned.

MRS. LEARNED: How do you do?

JANE: I hope you don't mind my breaking in like this, Mrs. Learned.

MRS. LEARNED: Of course not.

PROFESSOR: What is the nature of your business, Miss?

JANE: Purely academic, Professor.

PROFESSOR: Ah! that's what I like to hear from a young student. By the way, did you say you were in my classes?

JANE: No, sir. I'd like nothing better than to study with you, Professor, but I simply can't crowd your course into my schedule.

PROFESSOR: Too bad. History is mighty important, you know.

JANE: I realize that.

PROFESSOR: Yes, if you really want to understand the present, you must know what went on in the past.

JANE: Really?

PROFESSOR: Yes, indeed. Now then, young lady, what did you want to see me about?

JANE: Well, sir, I'd like to use your private library.

PROFESSOR: My private library?

JANE: Yes.

PROFESSOR: But what's the matter with the university library, or the public library?

JANE: Nothing. Only at both places I was told that you had the best collection of books on the Punic Wars that could be found anywhere.

MRS. LEARNED: My husband's hobby is reading and studying about the Punic Wars.

PROFESSOR (*pleased*): I'm afraid the librarians exaggerated a bit. While I'm proud of my collection, I don't think it compares with some of the others in the country.

JANE: I'm sure you're too modest, Professor.

PROFESSOR: Oh, come now!

JANE: It so happens that I'm writing a treatise on the Significance of the Third Punic War.

PROFESSOR (*delighted*): No?

JANE: Yes. I think it was terribly significant, don't you?

PROFESSOR: Oh, vastly significant! Vastly!

JANE: That's why I'd like to spend a little while browsing among your books. It would give me the feeling that I was with an authority.

PROFESSOR: Well, my dear young lady, if that's all you want, you may go right ahead.

JANE: Are you sure you won't mind?

PROFESSOR: Not at all.

MRS. LEARNED: Alfred is very generous with his books.

PROFESSOR (*opens the door to the library, up center*): Go right into the library, Miss Travers, and help yourself. You'll find a card index on the small table by the window.

JANE: Oh, thank you, Professor. I can't tell you how much this means to me.

PROFESSOR: Tut! Tut! Only too glad to do my bit, you know.

(*He holds the door open for Jane, who passes into the library.*)

MRS. LEARNED (*rises and starts to gather up her letters*): Well, Alfred, she seems like a very nice young girl.

PROFESSOR: Yes, charming girl. Charming! If only more of our young people were interested in history instead of this fritterbug dancing.

MRS. LEARNED: The word is jitterbug, Alfred, jitterbug.

PROFESSOR: Well, jitterbug or fritterbug, it's a horrible waste of time. (*He waves his hand in the direction of the library.*) Now that young woman is going to get somewhere.

MRS. LEARNED: I'm sure of that. (*She starts toward the door.*) I think I shall mail my letters, Alfred. I'll be right back.

PROFESSOR: Very well, m'dear. (*The doorbell rings.*)

MRS. LEARNED: I'll see who's at the door on my way out, Alfred. Stella has probably gone to bed.

PROFESSOR: Thank you. If it's anybody tiresome, er . . . send him away.

MRS. LEARNED: Very well.

[Exit Mrs. Learned. Professor Learned sits in his armchair again, resumes reading the paper. His back is towards the library door, which opens as soon as the Professor has sat down. Jane Travers looks towards the Professor, then closes the door.

PROFESSOR (muttering to himself as he reads the paper): Hmm.

Commodity prices to go up sharply. . . .

[Jack Dodge enters the room from the door, left. He is a snappily dressed young man. He carries a huge suitcase and several small boxes.

DODGE: Professor Learned?

PROFESSOR (sets his paper down, looks up at Dodge): Yes?

DODGE: My name is Dodge, Jack Dodge. I'm an inventor.

PROFESSOR: An inventor? (He rises.)

DODGE: An inventor. (He takes the Professor's hand, shakes it warmly.) And you're just the man I'm looking for.

PROFESSOR: I?

DODGE: Yes, you!

PROFESSOR: Well, if there is anything I can do to help you, Mr. Dodge, I shall be glad to be of assistance.

DODGE: There is something you can do, something very important.

PROFESSOR: Really?

DODGE: Professor Learned, after you've heard what I've come to see you about, you'll think I'm a lunatic.

PROFESSOR: Oh, not at all.

DODGE: Yes, you will. Or you'll think I'm a crank, which is worse.

PROFESSOR: Young man, I'm not very hasty in my judgments. Now what is it you want?

DODGE: Well. . . . (He looks guardedly around the room.) Is it all right to talk?

PROFESSOR: Of course.

DODGE: You're sure no one can hear us?

PROFESSOR: No one. . . .

DODGE: Professor, you've heard about this fellow Einstein.

PROFESSOR: Einstein? Why, yes! Who hasn't heard of him?

DODGE: And you know about his theories?

PROFESSOR: Well . . . er . . . Harumph! . . . yes . . . vaguely.

DODGE: Good! Then you know that there is a fourth dimension called time.

IT'S ABOUT TIME

PROFESSOR: I've heard a rumor to that effect.

DODGE: Now if time is a fourth dimension, why can't it be treated like the other dimensions?

PROFESSOR: I'm afraid I don't understand.

DODGE: Well, why can't time be preserved?

PROFESSOR: Time preserved? I'm not sure I get your point.

DODGE: Look, Professor, it's simple as A.B.C. Time is always with us. Right?

PROFESSOR (*thoughtfully*): Correct.

DODGE: Good. Now there is no future time. Right?

PROFESSOR: I daresay.

DODGE: Good! And there is no past time because the past is over. Right?

PROFESSOR (*strokes his chin reflectively*): Yes, yes. It all sounds very logical.

DODGE: Then that leaves only the present time.

PROFESSOR: Well?

DODGE: Well, if there is only the present time, then all time must be the same. See what I mean?

PROFESSOR (*sits weakly in a chair, rather overcome by all this*): No, I don't. To be truthful, I'm rather confused.

DODGE: Take it easy, Professor. Now I have a new invention. It has to do with time.

PROFESSOR (*repeating the words parrot-like*): You have a new invention. It has to do with time. Yes?

DODGE: Right! It's a time machine.

PROFESSOR: A what?

DODGE: A time machine.

PROFESSOR: Oh, you mean a clock?

DODGE: No, not a clock! A time machine. A clock only keeps the time. This machine of mine recovers time.

PROFESSOR: What do you mean?

DODGE: Listen! I came to you because you're known all over the country as an authority in history.

PROFESSOR: But what has that got to do with a time machine?

DODGE: Just this. By using my machine I can make time go back.

PROFESSOR: What do you mean, make time go back?

DODGE: I don't want to go into the technical details; the whole thing is very involved: it's tied up with radio, chemistry, physics—even metaphysics!

PROFESSOR: My word! Metaphysics?

DODGE: All I know is that I've stumbled on the greatest discovery of the age.

PROFESSOR (*gasps*): I should say you had. And how does this machine work?

DODGE: Professor, how would you like to talk to Cleopatra?

PROFESSOR: What's that?

DODGE: I said how would you like to talk to Cleopatra, or Mark Antony, or Napoleon, or Patrick Henry—or anybody? Even Genghis Khan?

PROFESSOR: You mean?

DODGE: I mean that by a twist of a little dial, which controls a radioactive substance, I can soar back over the centuries. The glory of ancient Rome, the clean beauty of Greece, these are mine.

PROFESSOR (*leans back in his chair, goggle-eyed*): Incredible! I don't believe it.

DODGE (*with a gesture of dismay*): I knew it! (*He picks up his things.*) Well, I thought that you, of all people, would have some faith in my idea. But I see that I was wrong. (*He pretends that he is about to leave.*)

PROFESSOR (*rises excitedly*): Just a minute, young man.

DODGE: What's the use? Columbus? They persecuted him. Galileo? They persecuted him. All great men! And now—(*he beats his chest*) me!

PROFESSOR: You must not be hasty—

DODGE: All right, Professor. I'm a lunatic! A nut! Everything I said to you tonight was the ranting of a fool. Goodbye. I won't bother you again.

PROFESSOR (*grabs Dodge, and pulls him back into the room*): Come back here, Mr. Dodge. I haven't said you were a lunatic, or that I didn't believe you.

DODGE (*pretending he is surprised*): You . . . you believe me?

PROFESSOR: Well, I'd like to see a demonstration of your . . . er . . . time machine.

DODGE: Thank you, sir. (*He sets the suitcase and boxes on the floor.*) And because you ask for it, you shall have it. (*He opens the suitcase, takes out a number of radio parts, begins assembling them.*) Now this dial control operates the whole thing.

PROFESSOR (*watching*): Most interesting.

DODGE: By turning a switch here, a switch there, I make time speed backward. Watch! (*He turns several dials.*) And listen.

PROFESSOR: I'm listening.

DODGE: Sometimes it takes a few minutes for the machine to get warmed up. (*He stops manipulating the dials, looks guardedly around the room.*) You're sure nobody can hear us?

PROFESSOR: Positive.

DODGE: Good! (*He twists the dials again, appears engrossed in the apparatus. A series of static-like sounds comes out of the set.*)

DODGE: Ah!

PROFESSOR: What is it?

DODGE: We are back in the nineteenth century.

PROFESSOR: No!

DODGE: Absolutely!

PROFESSOR: Amazing! (*He kneels on the floor beside Dodge.*)

DODGE: Ah!

PROFESSOR: What's the matter?

DODGE: Listen! Napoleon is talking to Josephine.

PROFESSOR: Napoleon?

DODGE: Listen!

THE VOICE OF NAPOLEON: Josephine, fetch my slippers. Do you hear?

DODGE: Pretty good, eh?

PROFESSOR: I must be dreaming!

[*The door of the library opens slightly. Jane Travers, unobserved by either Professor Learned or Jack Dodge, stands watching the two men.*]

DODGE: Shh! This is the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo.

THE VOICE OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON: I say! Isn't war a dreary business?

DODGE (*nods approvingly*): He should know.

PROFESSOR (*excitedly*): Have you told anybody about this?

DODGE: Not a soul. Shh! (*He holds up his hand.*) We're going back to ancient times. This is ancient Greece. Sounds like Pericles.

PROFESSOR: Oh, my! Pericles?

DODGE: Quiet.

THE VOICE OF PERICLES: Men of Greece! I salute you.

PROFESSOR: Oh, this is marvelous!

THE VOICE OF PERICLES: And I expect you to salute me!

DODGE (*turns to Professor Learned*): Is there any historical personage you'd like to speak to?

PROFESSOR: You mean . . . I can speak to them?

DODGE: Sure.

PROFESSOR: And they'll answer?

DODGE: Absolutely. This is a two-way time machine; that's the beauty of it. Only last night I had a long talk with Louis the Fourteenth. Nice guy.

PROFESSOR: Did he make any excuses?

DODGE: No.

PROFESSOR: Hm. It sounds just like him.

DODGE: Well, Professor, if there is anybody you'd like to speak to, anybody at all, just say the word.

PROFESSOR: I'm so excited I can hardly think straight.

DODGE: Take your time.

PROFESSOR: Let me see . . . (*He frowns thoughtfully.*) May I speak to Hannibal?

DODGE: Hannibal?

JANE (*steps forward*): Oh, Professor?

DODGE (*alarmed at the sight of Jane, he steps to his feet*): Say! what is this?

PROFESSOR (*turns to Jane*): Oh, Miss Travers.

DODGE: I thought you told me we were alone.

PROFESSOR: We were, that is, except for Miss Travers who was in the next room.

DODGE: Miss Travers, eh?

PROFESSOR: Yes. She is a student at the university.

DODGE: Oh.

JANE: I'm so sorry to disturb you, Professor, but I was wondering if you could give me some help in the library for just a moment.

PROFESSOR: Surely, Miss. (*Turns to Dodge.*) You'll excuse me for just a moment.

DODGE: Sure! Sure!

[Professor Learned and Jane Travers go into the library. Dodge watches them go. Then he looks around the room until he sees the telephone on the desk. He hurries to the phone, picks it up.]

DODGE: Hello. Give me Main 497. (*A slight pause during which Dodge looks guardedly around at the door, up center.*) Central Hotel? Room 49 please. Hello, Randy? Jack. Say, the set's working like a charm. Yeah! Did he fall for it? Like a ton of bricks! Boy, what a sap! Listen! I'll get a check from him before I leave. Sure! It's a cinch. Have everything ready for a quick getaway. So long. And listen. Don't be so quick on

those cues. We're supposed to be jumping over centuries, not over a couple of city blocks. Yeah! 'Bye. (*He sets the phone down, turns to his radio apparatus.*) A time machine, eh? Ha-ha! There's a sucker born every minute; only they're making them a lot faster these days.

[*The library door, up center, opens. Professor Learned and Miss Travers enter. Miss Travers is talking.*]

JANE: It's really remarkable how quickly you found that reference for me.

PROFESSOR: Oh, it's nothing.

JANE: You must have a photographic memory.

PROFESSOR: Yes, I've always prided myself on my keen memory.

DODGE: Well, Prof? Do you want me to go on with the demonstration?

PROFESSOR: The demons—oh, by all means! Miss Travers, this gentleman has discovered a most amazing device.

JANE: Really? (*She carefully examines the machine.*) It looks very complicated.

PROFESSOR: It's a sort of—

DODGE: Just a minute, Professor. Remember, this is just between you and me.

PROFESSOR: Oh, yes, I'd quite forgotten. I'm sorry, Miss Travers. I can't tell you the nature of this wonderful discovery.

DODGE: And I can't go on with the experiment unless we are all alone.

JANE: That means you want me to leave.

DODGE: Right!

PROFESSOR: If you don't mind.

JANE: Not at all. (*Miss Travers goes into the library closing the door behind her.*)

PROFESSOR (*rubbing his hands together gleefully*): Now then, Mr. Dodge. Let's go on.

DODGE (*kneels before the radio set, twists several dials*): All right, Prof. Where shall we go?

PROFESSOR (*kneels next to Dodge*): Oh, anywhere at all, anywhere at all.

DODGE (*twisting dials*): Ah!

PROFESSOR: Ah?

DODGE: This is Benjamin Franklin speaking.

PROFESSOR: No!

DODGE: Yes! Shh!

THE VOICE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: A penny saved is a penny earned.

DODGE: That fellow sure knew his stuff.

PROFESSOR: What profound wisdom!

DODGE: Like to ask him any questions?

PROFESSOR: If? (*Dodge nods.*) Yes, I would like to.

DODGE: Go right ahead.

PROFESSOR (*after a moment's hesitation*): Mr. Franklin.

THE VOICE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: What is it?

PROFESSOR: What advice would you give to a young man just starting out in life?

DODGE (*as he and the professor lean back and look anxiously at the machine*): You have to give him a little time to think.

PROFESSOR: Certainly.

THE VOICE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: My answer is . . .

PROFESSOR: Yes?

THE VOICE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: A penny saved is a penny earned.

DODGE: Smart guy, all right.

PROFESSOR: In other words . . . a penny saved is a penny earned. (*He rises delightedly to his feet.*) Why that's wonderful! It's so simple.

DODGE: Sure. Well, Professor, is there anybody else you'd like to talk to?

PROFESSOR: If you don't mind, I think I should like to talk to Hannibal.

DODGE: Hannibal, eh? (*He turns a few dials.*) Here he is.

THE VOICE OF HANNIBAL: Beyond the Alps lies Rome!

PROFESSOR (*over-joyed*): That's Hannibal! Those were his very words!

THE VOICE OF HANNIBAL: And beyond Rome . . . lie the Alps.

PROFESSOR (*almost staggers*): This is too . . . too much! I can't believe it.

DODGE (*suddenly turns off the machine*): Well, Professor, I mustn't take up any more of your time.

PROFESSOR: You're not leaving?

DODGE: Yes, I have to go. (*He begins picking up his apparatus.*)

PROFESSOR: But where are you going?

DODGE (*as he packs his things*): Home, to work on another invention.

PROFESSOR: Another one? Aren't you going to do anything with this one?

DODGE: Why should I? I get all my fun out of inventing something. After the invention is finished, I put it away and work on something new.

PROFESSOR: You mean . . . you mean you're not going to do anything with this magnificent, this stupendous discovery?

DODGE: Nope! I've got a new idea I want to work on: I'm going to invent an electric iron that makes waffles or pancakes while it irons.

PROFESSOR: An electric iron that . . . ?

DODGE: Sure! Then a housewife can cook her dinner at the same time that she's doing the family ironing. See what I mean?

PROFESSOR: But—don't you realize the importance of this time machine?

DODGE: Importance?

PROFESSOR: Yes! It may change our entire concept of history.

DODGE: Is that so?

PROFESSOR: I tell you, young man, this machine of yours is revolutionary! Revolutionary!

DODGE (*turns to go*): Say, Professor, my only interest in this machine is to get back some of the money I invested in it.

PROFESSOR: Then it's—it's for sale?

DODGE: Why not?

PROFESSOR (*half to himself*): Think of it! I, Alfred Q. Learned, in possession of all the secrets of history. Why—I'll be world famous. And I could talk to Hannibal every night before going to bed, merely by twisting a dial.

DODGE: You like the idea?

PROFESSOR: Like it? Why! the mere thought of it makes me tremble with anticipated ecstasy!

DODGE (*picks up his suitcase and boxes and starts out*): But I know better than to expect to sell this machine. (*With exaggerated sadness.*) I'm just an impractical visionary, an unsuccessful dreamer.

PROFESSOR: One moment, Mr. Dodge.

DODGE: I know I'm a failure, so you needn't rub it in, Professor. (*He starts out again.*) Goodbye.

PROFESSOR: Please, Mr. Dodge. One moment! (*Excitedly, he grabs Mr. Dodge, pulls him back to the center of the room.*) You say this machine is for sale?

DODGE: Yes, I did say that.

PROFESSOR: And how much do you want for it?

DODGE: Well . . . I'm not trying to make any money out of it, understand. (*He rubs his chin reflectively.*) Let me see . . . it cost me about twelve-hundred dollars to build this little gadget.

PROFESSOR: Twelve-hundred dollars?

DODGE: That's counting my time in, you understand. Yeah! (*Quickly catching himself.*) I mean, yes. Of course, I'd sell it for an even thousand. (*He shakes his head.*) But who wants to buy a time machine?

PROFESSOR: I do!

DODGE: You?

PROFESSOR: And I'll pay you a thousand dollars for it!

DODGE: But, Professor, what do you want with my invention?

PROFESSOR (*chuckles*): What do I want with it? Ha-ha! What do I want with it? (*He clutches Dodge excitedly by the lapels.*) Don't you see, m'boy? I can use it in my research work. (*He goes to the desk.*) Here! I'll make out a check this very minute.

DODGE (*sets the suitcase and boxes down*): Gosh, I don't know. I feel as though I'm taking advantage of you.

PROFESSOR: You're too modest, too honest—that's your trouble, Mr. Dodge. (*He sits down at the desk.*) I'll make out that check. Oh, what is the full name?

DODGE: But, Professor, you don't even know who I am.

PROFESSOR: Tut! Tut! No arguments! My mind is made up! Now what is the name?

DODGE: Well, if you insist. (*He stands behind the professor.*) Dodge. Jack Dodge.

PROFESSOR (*writes*): Jack Dodge. One thous-and dollars.

[*Jane comes out of the library. The men do not see her as they are facing the other way. Jane stands by the door, up center, one hand held behind her back.*]

PROFESSOR (*tears out the check*): Here you are, young man. (*He turns and holds the check out towards Dodge.*) One thousand dollars.

DODGE (*pretends to hesitate*): Are you sure you want to do this? I wouldn't want to force anybody to—

PROFESSOR: Tut! Tut! I'm sure this is a good investment. (*He forces the check on Dodge.*) Here you are.

DODGE (*takes the check*): Thank you.

JANE (*steps forward, a gun in her right hand*): All right, Dodge, put your hands up.

DODGE (*whirls in surprise*): What?

JANE: I said put your hands up! (*Dodge does so.*)

PROFESSOR (*alarmed*): Why, Miss Travers, what are you doing with that gun?

JANE (*goes quickly to Dodge, who is attempting to palm the check and conceal it*): Oh, no you don't! (*In a stern tone.*) Give me that check!

DODGE: What's the big idea?

JANE (*grabs the check away from him*): You'll find out soon enough.

PROFESSOR: What's the meaning of this?

JANE: It means you were taken in, Professor, by Jack Dodge, one of the slickest confidence men in the business.

PROFESSOR: Is Taken in? Impossible!

DODGE (*laughs*): Don't make me laugh, Professor!

JANE: Yes, we've been trying to catch him red-handed now for months.

DODGE (*reverting to tough type*): You ain't got a thing on me!

JANE: I have this check as evidence, and that fake radio set. (*Makes a movement with the gun.*) Keep those hands high, Dodge, and don't try anything!

PROFESSOR (*indignantly, as the truth hits him*): Am I to understand that this man is a fraud?

JANE: A plain crook.

PROFESSOR: But that set! It worked perfectly!

[*Dodge begins to laugh.*]

JANE: Sit down, Dodge!

DODGE: Okay, lady. (*He sits in an armchair.*) It worked perfectly! Ha-ha! That's a good one!

JANE: This contraption, Professor, is nothing but a two-way radio. At the other end is a friend of Mr. Dodge who used to be an actor. That's why the impersonations sound so convincing.

DODGE: Hey! how'd you know who was at the other end?

JANE: Well, Dodge, that's one reason why I asked the professor to leave the room. I knew you might make a 'phone call. And you did. Of course, we tapped the wires, listened in. After that two of our men stationed themselves outside your friend's room at the hotel.

DODGE: But how did you know I was coming to this guy's joint?

JANE: My dear fellow, it was very simple, very simple. We've been shadowing you for quite sometime and we "accidentally" overheard you making your plans with your pal.

DODGE: Well, I'll be. . . .

[Enter Mrs. Learned. *She looks in surprise at the people in the room.*

MRS. LEARNED: Alfred, what's going on here?

JANE: Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Learned. I'm on the police force, and I've just made an arrest.

MRS. LEARNED: Police force? Arrest?

PROFESSOR: This young scamp tried to pull the wool over my eyes.

MRS. LEARNED (smiles): Well, that shouldn't be difficult.

PROFESSOR: What's that?

MRS. LEARNED: Oh, nothing.

PROFESSOR: He tried to sell me some silly invention for one thousand dollars.

MRS. LEARNED: Well, Alfred, I hope you didn't buy it, not after what you told Stella tonight about gullible people.

PROFESSOR: Well, I—of course—I—harumph! . . .

DODGE: Sure he bought it! He even gave me a check for a thousand dollars.

MRS. LEARNED: A thousand dollars? Oh, Alfred!

PROFESSOR: Well, my dear, I thought the man was honest . . . er . . . You know how I like to encourage real talent. And so. . . .

JANE: I shall have to use your 'phone, if you don't mind. (*She picks up the 'phone.*)

MRS. LEARNED: Go right ahead, Miss.

JANE: Hello? Get me Police Headquarters, please. (*She keeps an eye on Dodge.*)

PROFESSOR (*shakes his fist angrily at Dodge*): I knew all the time you were a fake! Napoleon! Benjamin Franklin! Hannibal! Bah!

DODGE: Don't hand me that stuff, Prof. You're the most gullible guy I've ever dealt with!

PROFESSOR (*enraged*): Look here, Dodge! I won't stand for this! MRS. LEARNED: Well, Alfred, all I can say is that it's a lucky thing for us Miss Travers came along.

PROFESSOR: But, my dear—(*angrily to Dodge*) I'll see to it that you're put where you belong—in prison! A penny earned! Bah!

[*Stella enters. She is wearing a heavy woolen bathrobe, and her hair is all done up in hair curlers. She carries a newspaper.*

STELLA (*to Mrs. Learned*): Is anything wrong, M'am?

MRS. LEARNED: No, Stella, not a thing.

STELLA: I was reading last night's paper in my room, and I thought I heard some noise.

PROFESSOR (*snappishly*): Well, there's not a thing wrong, do you hear? Not a thing!

STELLA: Oh. (*She starts out again, then turns to Professor Learned.*) You know, Professor, I've just been reading in the paper how some man has been going all over the country trying to sell people a time machine.

MRS. LEARNED: A time machine?

PROFESSOR: You—you read that in—

STELLA (*holds up the paper*): Yes, right in last night's paper.

PROFESSOR: Oh.

MRS. LEARNED: Oh!

STELLA: But what I can't understand, Professor, is this: how can anybody be so stupid as to buy one!

[*Dodge laughs uproariously. Mrs. Learned and Jane are very much amused. The Professor is quite embarrassed.*

JANE: Hello? Police Headquarters?

STELLA: For it's just like you said, Professor, some people are awful dumb!

CURTAIN

END OF THE RAINBOW

By SIGMUND A. STOLER

CHARACTERS

PATRICIA (PAT) STUART

MARGIE HALE

RAOUL PHILLIPS

EVELYN WARFIELD

OFFICER LYTLE

Time: Prologue: 10:30 at night.

Scene Two: A few minutes later.

Place: Around New York.

The prologue is played before the curtain.

Scene Two takes place in the apartment hide-out occupied now by Raoul Phillips and Evelyn Warfield.

COSTUMES AND PROPERTIES

The clothes worn are all modern. One policeman uniform.

The properties consist of: records of woods sounds at night; (these can be borrowed or bought at any good record shop), a small container of matches; paper for notes; kitchen table; three chairs; sofa; lamp; two easy chairs; table; pictures.

LIGHTING AND NOTES

The lighting is carefully described by the author before and during each scene.

The stage sets are described in detail by the author before each scene.

THE PLAY

SCENE ONE

Prologue in front of the curtain.

After the house lights have been dimmed, a cool green (or violet) spotlight, to suggest faint moonlight, is thrown on the curtains, right stage. Together with the spot, a recording should be started backstage of noises to be found in a wood: crickets, a waterfall, hoot of an owl, an occasional wolf-cry. A few seconds later, Patricia Stuart and Margie Hale wander in front of the curtains to stand bathed by the spotlight. They are both pretty girls 15 or 16 years old. Pat is holding a slip of paper which she is trying to read, but is not succeeding because of the insufficient light. Margie is hanging over her shoulder.

PAT: It's no use, Margie. You'll have to strike another match. I can't see a thing.

MARGIE: There's only two left.

PAT: Well, use one of them.

MARGIE: But, Pat, what if—

PAT: Look, we can't stay in this swamp for the rest of the night.

MARGIE: No, but we'll never get a lift if a car can't see us, either. And if we have to walk back to town, it's five miles—and I don't mean like the crow flies.

PAT: Oh, stop arguing.

MARGIE (*mumbling*): Don't know how this old, idiotic treasure hunt started anyway.

PAT: And stop mumbling.

MARGIE: Well, it's raining and I'm unhappy, and besides, I think the matches are wet.

PAT: Here, let me see.

MARGIE (*jerking away*): Oh, no, you don't. I'm the kid who strikes the matches in this crowd.

PAT (*desperately*): Well, for pity's sake, kid, function then.

MARGIE (*lights match*): There you are. Every time. What does it say?

PAT: Get off my shoulder.

MARGIE (*surprised*): It does.

PAT: No, you.

MARGIE: Oh.

PAT (*reading*): "This is note number ten."

MARGIE: We know that.

PAT: "This is note number ten.

Only one from the end."

MARGIE: Ten. End. They're not fooling anyone with that poetry.

PAT (*elaborately*): Would it be too much trouble to keep your noisy trap shut until I finish?

MARGIE: Go on, prima donna.

PAT: "This is note number ten.

Only one from the end.

Four and ten in Center Street

Fourth floor rear your search complete."

MARGIE: And there goes the match.

PAT: Four-ten Center Street. Fourth floor rear. We have to get back to town.

MARGIE: Which hardly surprises me.

PAT: At least we're getting out of these woods.

MARGIE: How are we going?

PAT: We're going to walk, Margie, dear. Unless you'd prefer—

MARGIE (*wailing*): I can't walk. Honestly I can't, Pat. I'm the original tired metatarsal.

PAT: Oh, stop it. You walked out.

MARGIE: That was two hours ago. I was young then. Now I'm a tired old lady.

PAT: You can't be that fragile.

MARGIE: You forget you were a camp-fire girl.

PAT: Look, Hot-House Rose, if you think I'm going to carry you back—

MARGIE: Pat, you go alone. I'll wait here. You can send someone after me.

PAT: Oh, I could scream. I'm so mad. This treasure hunt was your idea in the first place. Now you want me to walk back that dark road alone—at night. With Heaven only knows who lurking in the bushes ready to grab at me—

MARGIE: All right. I didn't mean it.

PAT: Why I ever listened to a dim-brain like yours in the beginning, I don't know. Treasure hunt! (*In disgust.*) Oh!

MARGIE: Don't start yelling at me. It was as much your idea as mine.

PAT: Who saw the advertisement in the paper?

MARGIE: Can I help it if I'm just naturally more observant than you?

PAT: And who insisted that we go? Who insisted that our lives were dull and needed brightening and excitement? Excitement! My foot. (*She slaps her arm.*) Mosquitoes.

MARGIE: I don't hear you complaining about the twenty-five dollars we're going to get for winning.

PAT: If we get it.

MARGIE: Twenty-five bucks just for chasing around the woods a few hours at night is not bad pay, Patricia.

PAT: All of which we should be collecting back at four-ten Center Street. That's our last stop. Say, you don't think—

MARGIE: Of course not. Who else'd be fool enough to come out on a night like this?

PAT: There's no telling what way I'd commit the murder if someone should beat us to that money.

MARGIE (*innocently*): What murder?

PAT (*with great sweetness*): Yours, dear. (*A car horn is heard.*) Listen.

MARGIE: A car. It's a car—or a moose. How does a moose go?

PAT: Look. The lights are coming this way. (*Headlights are flashed offstage left to shine on the girls.*) Quick, light the match so he can see us. I'll holler. (*She waves frantically.*) Yoo-hoo. Yoo-hoo.

MARGIE: I'm so nervous.

PAT: Light the match. Light the—oh, what if he doesn't stop! (*She starts off left.*)

MARGIE: Where are you going?

PAT: To fall in the middle of the road. I'm not taking any chances. There. He is stopping. Come on, Margie.

MARGIE (*as they run offstage down left, she suddenly stops*): Hey, wait. I just thought of something.

PAT (*still rushing*): Tell me later.

MARGIE: What if he doesn't have a radio? I hate cars without radios.

PAT: Just wait here for the next bus. 'Bye. (*She exits left.*)

MARGIE: Pat. I was only joking. Wait. Wait for me. (*Exits after her.*)

SCENE Two

Scene Two begins when the girls disappear. As soon as they are out of sight, the curtains are quickly drawn revealing the address to which they have been sent: 410 Center Street, fourth floor rear. It is a mild-looking apartment with comfortably undistinguished furniture. Door to the outside is cut center right on the back wall; there is an alcove in the back wall center to accommodate a kitchen table and three chairs, obviously sort of a kitchenette. To the left of the recess is another door leading to the kitchen itself. Door leading to the bedroom is center of the left wall. A window is down right on the right wall.

The sofa is down left, diagonally, with a standard lamp at its left; two easy chairs are center right and down right, placed to face the sofa, but not intruding with entrances made from door leading to outside. There is a table between these two chairs. Chair upstage is closer to center of the stage than its companion. A few tasteful-looking pictures are hung on the walls.

At curtain rise on a well-lighted set, Raoul Phillips is pacing up and down center stage, puffing nervously on a cigarette, obviously in great agitation. He is wearing a well-fitted business suit, has a mustache. After walking a few seconds, he stops suddenly, clinches his cigarette and calls:

RAOUL: Evelyn. Evelyn.

EVELYN'S VOICE (offstage left): Be right with you, Raoul.

RAOUL (impatiently): What are you doing in there anyway?

[Evelyn enters from door in left wall. She is a willowy-looking blonde, about 25 years old, very cool and self-possessed. She, too, is dressed very smartly.

RAOUL: Stay out here, will you? You know—

EVELYN: Now why don't you settle down, Raoul. Keep this up and you'll have me as nervous as you are.

RAOUL: That'll be the day. Who's always done the worrying and nail-biting in this combination?

EVELYN: You have, but I think you enjoy being in a flutter.

RAOUL (sarcastically): Unfortunately, I can't achieve your oriental calmness at a time like this. Add to that, I'm sick of waiting.

EVELYN: Relax, Raoul. The call'll come through. It's due any-time now.

RAOUL: It's been due anytime now for the past two hours.

EVELYN: Jake knows his business.

RAOUL: The agreement was for Jake to call us as soon as some-one found the last note sending him here. Not let us sit around knocking ourselves groggy worrying.

EVELYN: But we're not sitting around knocking ourselves groggy worrying. *You* are.

RAOUL: You've been awfully hard to work with since you've got so clever.

EVELYN: Really.

RAOUL: Well, if this brilliant little scheme you've hatched is a fair sample—

EVELYN: It is.

RAOUL: I only hope you haven't slipped up anywhere. You know what happens to us in case.

EVELYN: Yes. You go to the men's division, and I go to the women's. For twenty years in a nice, big federal penitentiary for counterfeiting—if they catch us.

RAOUL (*contemptuously*): Treasure hunt! If that doesn't take the prize for—

EVELYN: Listen, Mr. Arsene Lupin, if you had a better idea for moving the stuff, why didn't you mention it?

RAOUL: Don't tell me it's possible you might have been wrong.

EVELYN: My, you have a bad temper, Raoul.

RAOUL: I do not. I'm on edge.

EVELYN: Pull yourself together. Nothing's going to go wrong. Jake'll call as soon as he can and tell us whom to expect and when to get ready.

RAOUL: But what if he gets suspicious? What if—

EVELYN: Who?

RAOUL: Whoever it is that's coming.

EVELYN: He won't get suspicious. Why should he? The whole thing's legitimate as far as he's concerned. The tenth note tells him to come here. Once he gets here, he finds the last note and a package—a very small, innocent looking pack-age—

RAOUL: That contains a hundred thousand dollars—

EVELYN: Not printed by the United States—but that's a small discrepancy—to be delivered to a Dr. Sandone who lives across the river in New York. Dr. Sandone, in turn, will

present the winner with the magnificent sum of twenty-five dollars for his cleverness and ability in treasure-hunting. The pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Isn't it sweet?

RAOUL: I don't know. It sounds too easy, somehow. Maybe we should have delivered it ourselves.

EVELYN: Don't you realize that is just what we can't do. I'm as sick of staying cooped up in this place as you. But how are we going to get out with that money? If we would manage to dodge the police, who'll protect us from the Benfer mob? The only thing they mind is shooting you in the stomach. They prefer to wait until your back is turned.

RAOUL: Anytime I'm afraid of those cheap, second-rate crooks—

EVELYN: It isn't a question of courage. You can see that. We're going to outwit them—right under their noses. Besides, I'd hate to have the police find us with that bogus money. Remember how nasty the judge got the last time? He looked as though he meant it.

RAOUL: Evelyn, if this thing goes through—

EVELYN: What do you mean, *if*? It must go through.

RAOUL: All right. Whatever you want. But when it's finished, let's get out of this racket. What do you say? I'm fed up to the ears. Always running from the police. Never knowing from one day to the next where you're going to land.

EVELYN: To do what? Become respectable citizens? Don't make me laugh. I'm in this for the thrills I can get. You know that. It's exciting—it's—(*the telephone rings violently.*) Jake! What'd I tell you!

RAOUL: And about time. I'll take it.

EVELYN: No, let me. You're liable to miss something.

RAOUL (*angrily*): Thanks.

EVELYN (*into telephone, very cautiously*): Hello . . . Yes, this is Evelyn Warfield . . . (*infinitely relieved*) Oh, Jake, it's about time. Raoul was getting set to— What, right away? . . . Who? . . . Two girls . . . Two young girls . . . How long ago? . . . Why didn't you call before? . . . All right. Never mind. (*She slams telephone. Turns to Raoul.*) We'll have to work fast. They'll be here in a minute.

RAOUL (*disgustedly*): Two young girls. That's fine. That's very fine.

EVELYN: It's even better than that.

RAOUL: They'll ruin the whole thing. A couple of dizzy children.

EVELYN: We couldn't have got a better break if we'd have ordered them. Of course they'll be dizzy children. With nothing nastier on their minds than staying up after 12 o'clock at night. (*Joyously.*) I tell you, Raoul, it's the perfect touch. Innocent babes delivering a hundred thousand dollars worth of home-made money. (*She laughs happily.*) Oh, it's too much.

RAOUL: Maybe you'd better hold your congratulations until we know Sandone has the stuff. Or will that put a strain on your naturally high spirits?

EVELYN: All right, Gloomy Gus. Have it your way. We've still work to do. They'll be on our heels in a second.

RAOUL: I tell you, Evelyn, I don't like it. It's—

EVELYN: And for the last time, I'm telling you to keep your fat face closed. I'm running this show. Is that clear?

RAOUL (*there is a tense moment—he visibly droops*): O.K. You're running the show. What's first?

EVELYN: See that the hall light is turned on outside. (*Gets note from kitchen table.*) And tack this note on the door. Listen. How does it sound?

RAOUL: You mean you want my opinion?

EVELYN: Don't be a baby, Raoul. Certainly I want your opinion. (*Reading.*)

"Your search is done,
But a trip's in store.
We're not at home,
So you open the door."

RAOUL: Sounds all right.

EVELYN: Is it clear?

RAOUL: It's O.K. Where do you want it? (*He takes note and exits door leading to outside.*)

EVELYN: Right in the middle of the door. So they can't miss it. (*Alone she begins switching off lights so only one lamp is left burning.*)

RAOUL: Anything else out here?

EVELYN: No. (*She starts to exit through door in left wall.*)

RAOUL (*re-enters*): What about the—

EVELYN (*as she disappears through left wall leaving door open*): I'll get the package. (*Exits.*)

RAOUL: Do you have a note for it?

EVELYN (*offstage*): Yes. And a—

RAOUL (*suddenly dashes to window right stage*): Ev. Hurry it

up. I think I heard the lower door slam. (*At window.*) Two girls are coming in now.

EVELYN (*re-enters, carrying a small package about size of a book*): Good. Here it is. We're all set.

RAOUL: Where are you putting it?

EVELYN: Where do you think?

RAOUL: On the kitchen table.

EVELYN: Too obvious.

RAOUL: Look, we want them to find it and get out of here.

EVELYN: That's true. All right. The kitchen table.

RAOUL: Directions there?

EVELYN: Everything.

RAOUL: Listen, did you—

EVELYN: Yes, I sealed it. In four different places. It can't be opened without—

RAOUL (*grabs her arms as you hear Pat and Margie running outside the door. He whispers.*): Hold it. Come on.

EVELYN (*holds out her hand*): Success, Raoul.

RAOUL (*they shake hands*): Here's luck.

[They go off left very quickly and silently as you hear a pounding on the door. It stops for a moment, then is renewed more firmly.

MARGIE (*offstage*): Four flights of stairs and no one's home. I'm going to sue somebody.

PAT (*offstage*): Look, here's a note.

MARGIE (*offstage*): "Your search is done,
But a trip's in store.

PAT (*offstage*): "We're not at home,
So you open the door."

MARGIE: What are we waiting for? Come on. (*They enter. At first they talk in subdued whispers as they're not sure of themselves. They stand at one spot inside the door.*)

PAT (*looks around*): Gee, this is funny.

MARGIE: How do you mean funny—as though I didn't know.

PAT: Wouldn't you think there'd be somebody—

MARGIE: Let's see that note again. (*Pat gives her the note. She reads.*) "Your search is done—"

PAT: If it's done, where is it?

MARGIE: Where's what?

PAT: The twenty-five dollars.

MARGIE: Maybe it's in an envelope.

PAT: All right. Where's the envelope?

MARGIE: Maybe we're supposed to look around. (*Doubtfully.*)
Maybe.

PAT: Well, I don't think we should go looking around someone's apartment.

MARGIE: They told us we should.

PAT (*suddenly*): I don't like this at all. Let's get out of here.

MARGIE: You mean give up?

PAT: Well, look, Margie, this is—

MARGIE: After chasing all over town and playing hide and seek with a bunch of trees all night, you want to quit now. Are you crazy?

PAT: No, but—

MARGIE: Oh, don't be silly. Probably some old millionaire or someone who has more money than sense wants to have some fun. After all, we're here. We might as well nose around and see what's what.

PAT: You do the nosing then. I'm not going to.

MARGIE (*walks around apartment, looks under cushion of chair, turns to Pat indicating chair*): Not there.

PAT: No, and I'll bet—

MARGIE: Come on. Help. (*She finds light switch, turns on lights.*)

PAT: Here, what are you doing?

MARGIE: Can't work in the dark.

PAT: Honestly, Marge, you're fresh as—

MARGIE: Go on, it's not going to run up their light bill that much. (*She goes to telephone on stand between easy chairs.*) Some people hide things under telephones. (*Lifts telephone.*) No, wrong again.

PAT: Gosh, I might as well. I'll take the sofa. (*Goes to sofa to look under cushions. Lifts one; throws it back.*) Phew! These cushions haven't been dusted in a year.

MARGIE (*by telephone, thinking*): Say.

PAT (*abstractedly, searching*): Huh?

MARGIE: While I'm thinking of it, I wonder how much it would cost to call Glenn.

PAT: Glenn who?

MARGIE: You know, the cute one in Texas.

PAT: Now don't get any ideas like that.

MARGIE (*lifts telephone*): If these people were the kind who call long distance a lot they'd never even notice a little call to Texas. (*Into receiver.*) Operator, get me long distance.

PAT: Margie Hale!

MARGIE: I'm not going to. I'm just comparing prices. Some places it's cheaper. (*Into telephone.*) Long distance? . . . How much would a call to Texas cost? . . . San Antonio, Texas . . . Oh, three dollars for three minutes . . . Well—
PAT (*runs to her, grabs telephone*): Are you crazy? Put that 'phone down. (*She replaces it after her speech.*)

MARGIE: What did you do that for?

PAT: You're awful. My goodness, making a long distance—

MARGIE: I wasn't going to do it.

PAT: Not much.

MARGIE: Well—(*telephone rings*)

PAT: There. See. Probably the operator calling back. Now don't you touch it.

MARGIE: I'll just tell her I changed my mind.

PAT: Nothing of the kind. You let that 'phone alone. (*Telephone rings again.*) Get on with your looking.

MARGIE: That's right. Order me around. (*Starts looking in kitchenette.*) No mind of my own. Have to be told everything.

PAT: And stop that idiotic mumbling. If you don't—

MARGIE (*holds up package*): Pat, look.

PAT (*goes to her*): What is it?

MARGIE: A package and a note. It says: "To the treasure-hunters." That's us.

PAT: Jeepers, the twenty-five dollars. Read the note.

MARGIE (*unfolds note and reads*): "Congratulations on your skill and cleverness in treasure-hunting." (*Looks up at Pat.*) Well, that's real nice of them.

PAT (*continues reading*): "You will get—"

MARGIE: Oh, Lordy—"will get—"

PAT (*goes right on*): "You will get your twenty-five dollars reward from Dr. Jay Sandone, 714 Kellborne Street, New York City, upon delivery of this package. Speed is essential and the best of luck."

MARGIE: New York. Now it's New York.

PAT: Only across the river.

MARGIE: Yes, but more traveling. I'm all in. (*Takes package and sits on sofa.*)

PAT: Let's not go through that again.

MARGIE: Well, I am. For a treasure-hunt, we've certainly done enough walking. Why didn't they just call it a foot-race and have done with it.

END OF THE RAINBOW

MARGIE: You know, the further we go on with this thing, the more I realize how much happier I'd have been if I'd never learned how to read a newspaper.

PAT: We're not going to get any place sitting around moaning.

MARGIE: No, but I enjoy listening to myself.

PAT: Make up your mind. It's getting late. I'm getting tired. Do we go to New York according to instructions or do we call off the whole business right now? The time for fooling is over.

MARGIE: Oh, serious business, huh?

PAT: Very serious.

MARGIE (*throwing package into air and catching it*): Say, what do you suppose is in here?

PAT: At this point I wouldn't care if it were somebody's grandmother.

MARGIE: Awfully little for a grandmother, isn't it? Maybe *part* of a grandmother, but hardly—

PAT: Oh, stop prattling.

MARGIE: Don't you think we'd better open it and see if it isn't a bomb or something? (*Throws it into air again.*)

PAT (*imitating her*): No, I don't think we'd better open it to see if it's a bomb or something.

MARGIE (*fiddling with it*): Look. One of the seals came loose. The other ones aren't very solid either.

PAT: We're not supposed to open it.

MARGIE: The note didn't say we weren't.

PAT: No, but—

MARGIE: Gosh, two more came loose. Isn't that strange?

PAT: Very strange considering you're only running your fingernail over them. Can't understand it.

MARGIE (*tries to undo package*): Gee, there's only one left.

PAT (*getting interested herself*): And that looks kind of shaky too, doesn't it? Give it another wiggle.

MARGIE (*slitting the last seal*): The sealing wax you get nowadays is awfully poor stuff. I was just telling Mom the other day. (*She starts to remove paper from the outside.*) Mom, I said, have you bought any sealing wax lately?

EVELYN (*suddenly the door in the left wall opens very softly and Evelyn appears holding a gun. When she talks, the girls spring up as if they had been shot.*): And what did your Mother reply?

PAT: Look, it's a woman with a gun.

MARGIE (*holds package*): Who—who are you?

EVELYN (*enters, followed by Raoul. They stand down stage right*): Pity you couldn't have been in more of a hurry and less inquisitive. You've just got yourself into a mess.

PAT: See here, what's going on—

MARGIE: What do you mean?

EVELYN: Take the package, Raoul. Then lock the door.

MARGIE (*to Raoul*): You touch me and I'll scream.

EVELYN: Go ahead. It'll be your last one.

PAT: She was only fooling. She says things like that all the time.

RAOUL (*gets the package from Margie who retreating from him falls into chair. He locks door.*): Now what do we do with them? and this?

PAT: We haven't done anything. Honest. We found a note—

MARGIE: We've been finding them all evening. It was a treasure hunt. First we started—

EVELYN: Don't bother. I know the details.

RAOUL (*in disgust*): A couple of dizzy children. Nothing on their minds except staying up later than 12 o'clock.

EVELYN: Raoul, keep the girls company for a while. In silence. Get it!

MARGIE: If you want to think, Pat and I could leave. We were just saying it was high time we were going and—

EVELYN (*menacingly*): Sit down and shut up.

RAOUL: She means it.

EVELYN: One of you will have to stay here. (*Points to Margie.*) You. You're the noisiest and apparently the least reliable.

MARGIE: What do you mean, stay here? I can't. I have to go home. I sneaked out without finishing the dishes and—

EVELYN (*not hearing her, turns to Pat*): You'll follow the instructions on the package. What's your name?

MARGIE (*quickly*): Gwendolyn. Gwendolyn Jerkfinkel.

EVELYN (*coolly*): She said Pat, didn't she? Short for Patricia?

PAT: Yes.

MARGIE: She told me it was Gwendolyn. Miss Jerkfinkel, she said.

EVELYN: All right, Pat. There's nothing to be afraid of. You'll take the package to Dr. Sandone. To make sure you do, we'll keep your little girl-friend here. As soon as I get a call from Sandone that he has the package and everything's in order, she'll be released. Understand?

PAT: Couldn't we go together?

EVELYN: The only place you want to go together is to the police.
Isn't that right, Pat?

MARGIE: Oh, no. She never thought of it. Did you?

EVELYN: To make sure you don't, we'll be moving out of here after you. You will tell Sandone to call us at the second address. He'll know what you're talking about. And I'll be sure you won't be sending any cops around to find us.

MARGIE (*she is getting frightened*): You can't make me stay here. You can't. I have to go.

PAT: Don't be scared, Marge. It won't be long. I'll get over to New York in—(*Brisk knocking at door leading to outside interrupts.*)

RAOUL (*whispers*): Who's that?

EVELYN: Quiet. (*She turns to the two girls, covers them with her gun.*) One sound from either of you and I shoot. I mean it. So help me. One little peep.

OFFICER LYITLE'S VOICE (*knocking again offstage*): Anyone home? (*Knocks.*) Hey. Anybody home in there? (*Knocks.*) Okay. (*We hear him turning and walking down the steps.*)

MARGIE (*screams*): Help! Help us!

[*Evelyn fires the gun, but at the same time, Raoul dashes out and knocks her arm causing her to miss fire. They begin to tussle for the gun and Pat and Margie put up a terrible screaming. The stage is in utter confusion with Raoul and Evelyn fighting and Pat and Margie yelling at the top of their lungs.*]

LYITLE (*rattles door and shouts offstage*): Open the door. Open the door or I'll break it down. Do you hear me? (*He starts to knock against it. It is suggested that he pound against a wall offstage and not the scenery. The effect will be the same and no damage resulting.*)

EVELYN (*yells at Raoul*): You fool. You've finished us for good now.

RAOUL (*holding the gun*): Go on. Open the door before he smashes it. (*Pat and Margie rush to the door and throw it open.*)

LYITLE (*in officer's uniform enters, holding his gun. He speaks to Raoul*): Drop it. (*Takes Raoul's gun.*) What's going on in here?

PAT (*runs to Lytle*): You came just in time.

We were—

MARGIE (*also runs to Lytle*): Oh, let me out of here. (*Together.*) She's going to kill us. I think she did.

EVELYN (*to Raoul*): Nice work.

LYTLE: All right. One at a time.

MARGIE: She tried to kill me. Where am I shot?

EVELYN: Don't be ridiculous. The gun went off accidentally.

MARGIE: She did. She said if I'd yell, she'd kill me. And I yelled.

LYTLE: Well. Well. If it isn't Evelyn and Raoul. Thought you two were running a nice honest night-club.

RAOUL: We were.

MARGIE (*gibbering*): She was going to kidnap me. Pat had to go to New York and—

LYTLE: All right, little girl. Take it easy.

RAOUL (*to Evelyn*): What was the use, Ev? How far could we get hauling these two brats around? This way we don't have a murder on our hands.

PAT: I think they're crooks, Officer. They were sending me to—

LYTLE: You're right there. Counterfeitors. Best in the country.

EVELYN: Thanks for the compliment, Lytle. The Benfer mob'll be sorry to hear they're only in second place.

LYTLE: Never knew you to miss a shot though, Evelyn. And so close.

RAOUL: The gun went off accidentally, Lytle. You heard her say so.

LYTLE: O.K. O.K. Whatever you want. You can tell the whole story down at the station.

MARGIE: Aren't you going to do anything to them, Officer? She's dangerous. She tried to—

EVELYN: One thing, Lytle. Whatever brought you up here? No one knew we were in town, much less trying to dodge the police.

LYTLE: The funniest thing. (*Laughs.*) The telephone operator called headquarters about ten minutes ago to report a party trying to make a long-distance call to Texas. Said the woman was just going to give her number when there was a lot of noise and fighting—then the receiver was jammed on the hook. When she tried to call back, no one would answer. She thought it sounded suspicious and wanted us to investigate. No one down at the station was even going to bother with it. I was on my way home.

MARGIE: That was me. (*Turns to Pat.*) Just think, if Glenn hadn't gone to Texas we'd be full of bullet holes by now.

LYTLE (*to Pat and Margie*): We'll need both of you as witnesses. Save your stories for the chief. He likes them detailed.

PAT: There goes our twenty-five dollars. They should make them give it to us. (*Turns to Lytle.*) I've already ordered the dress.

LYTLE: Twenty-five dollars! Six states will pay you two thousand dollars for bringing these two in.

MARGIE: Gee whiz, they're going to pay us for trapping them.

RAOUL: We're worth a lot of money. To the right people. (*Looks at Evelyn.*) You see, girls, it's like a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

[*Evelyn's head droops. She feels beaten.*

MARGIE: Yeah, and if she (*indicates Evelyn*) had anything to do with it, I'll bet it's full of lead quarters. (*Turns to Lytle.*) Let's go, Officer.

[*The four of them start through the door as the CURTAIN CLOSES.*



HIS WONDERS TO PERFORM

By ANN KING

CHARACTERS

TIM, *the janitor*

REVEREND MARTIN

JOHN STEWART, *a reporter, about 17*

JEAN, 9

MARY, 11 } *children of the parish*

BILL, 7

BETTY, 8 }

POLLY, 10 } *children of the neighborhood*

DELIVERY BOY

WESTERN UNION BOY

W. W. JOHNSON

MARTHA THOMAS

DODD

SCOTT

JONES

MRS. GREEN, *a poor woman*

Other children if desired for Scene One

Time: The action will take about twenty-five minutes.

Place: Any small town.

COSTUMES

The costumes are everyday ones. The children, Tim, Mrs. Green are all poorly dressed. Mary and Jean wear caps and gowns in Scene Two. A Western Union coat and hat are needed, also two choir robes which can easily be made of white cheesecloth or other white material.

PROPERTIES AND LIGHTING

Telephone; lamp; papers; books; bucket; broom; rags. A box of paint cleaner; clock on mantelpiece. There are also Christmas wreaths and greens. A victrola and records of Christmas carols; notebooks; pencils; papers; camera; flashbulb and holder; plate of apples; small table; newspaper; two baskets of food; and a big package.

Use ordinary lighting that is available.

NOTES

Although most of the characters in the play as written are male parts, they may easily be changed to female parts. Tim could be changed to Mamie, a charwoman, and more of the reporters could be girls; W. W. Johnson could be Mrs. Johnson, a dynamic business woman, etc., if it were advisable to have more female parts.

The quotation from which the title is taken is from "Light Shining out of Darkness" by William Cowper.

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform:
He plants his footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

SETTING

The scene is the study of the minister of a small church early Christmas Eve. There is a door at the left, rear, leading outdoors, and one at the right, rear, leading to another part of the church building. At the left is a fireplace, flanked by chairs, and a table on which stands a plate of apples. At the right, front, placed at an angle, is a desk with a telephone and a lamp on it. A bookcase stands against the wall, right. At the back is a window. The room has a shabby, pleasant air. At the left, front, is a bucket, some rags, a broom, and a box plainly labelled paint-cleaner.

THE PLAY

SCENE ONE

The time is the afternoon of the day before Christmas. At the rising of the curtain Tim is moving about the study, dusting the furniture. The door at the left opens and Reverend Martin comes in. He is wearing a hat and overcoat and scarf.

TIM: Good day to ye, Reverend.

REVEREND MARTIN: And a good day to you, Tim. (*He takes off his hat, coat and scarf and throws them over a chair by the fireplace.*) But it's a bitter cold day for those who must be outdoors. The rain has turned to sleet and the wind is blowing a gale. (*He stamps his feet and warms his hands at the fire.*)

TIM: And what were ye doing out on such a day? And you with your arthritis and all? (*He continues dusting and moving small articles, books, lamp, papers, etc., into place on the desk and bookcase.*)

REVEREND MARTIN: Just making a few calls in the neighborhood. Trying to make sure that at least there would be something to eat in every home over the holidays.

TIM: Aye, it's a hard winter. And tomorrow'll be a sad Christmas for many, what with the mills closed and the men out of work.

REVEREND MARTIN: Yes, I'm afraid so. Well, we must do what we can to help. (*He walks over to the window and looks out.*)

TIM (*taking up the broom and beginning to sweep*): I'll be done with this in a minute. I just wanted to tidy up a bit in here before I finish cleaning up the church. Though like as not that'll have to be done all over again after the children have finished putting up their decorations. I could hang the greens myself without half the mess and clutter the young folk will be making.

REVEREND MARTIN: But the children love doing it. And singing carols and then hanging the greens in the church is part of our Christmas tradition. The children have done it every Christmas since I've been here.

TIM: Aye, ever since I've been here, too. And I've been working

in this church for over forty years. (*He stops sweeping and leans on the broom.*) Oh, yes, there was a call on the telephone for you while you were out. It was the Stewart boy, him that used to sing in the choir and that you got that job on the newspaper. He says he wants to put something in the paper about the anniversary celebration we're having here in the church tomorrow. So I told him you'd probably be in late this afternoon if he wanted to see you about it.

REVEREND MARTIN: Young Stewart? Oh, yes, of course. I'll be glad to see the boy again. And I've been thinking that there should be something in the papers about the service tomorrow, since we're celebrating the 100th anniversary of the building of this church, as well as Christmas. I hope we have a good congregation.

TIM (*begins to sweep again*): Well, there'll be more here than usual, I guess. But it won't be like Christmas in the old days, with all the fine ladies in their velvet dresses and the men in their silk hats. (*He sighs.*) It's only poor folk who come here now. There's been a good many changes in the 100 years this church has been standing here. This used to be a prosperous neighborhood before all the rich folk moved uptown. There was no need in those days for the minister of this church to make sure his people were going to have something to eat for Christmas dinner. (*While he has been talking Reverend Martin has walked over to his desk, sat down and put his head in his hands.*)

REVEREND MARTIN (*looking up*): There is so much to do, and so little to do it with. My people are good, hard-working people, but they need more material help than I can give them. Mrs. Smith should be in a hospital, and yet if she goes there'll be no one to take care of her three small children. And over at the Thompson's this afternoon I found the two youngest huddled together in bed because there were not enough warm clothes to go around. That's only two families! I could name a hundred that need help!

TIM: And I don't doubt that you'll find some way to get it for them. But it's a sad thing and that's the truth. And I do wish there was some way to get the roof of the church building mended. That patch at the back is fair rotten again. It won't last the winter out, what with the weather we've been having. (*He stops sweeping, leans on his broom again.*)

REVEREND MARTIN: I know, I'll have to see what I can do about it. But there are so many other things that need doing first.

TIM (*glances at the clock on the mantelpiece*): Ah, now, look at the time, would you! I'll have to hurry if I'm to get the church properly clean. I've been thinking I'd wash up the woodwork around the altar if I had time. (*He gathers together his rags, bucket, and broom, putting the paint-cleaner under one arm.*)

REVEREND MARTIN: Let me know when the children come, Tim. I always enjoy singing the carols with them and helping them put up the Christmas decorations.

TIM: Sure, the young folk will let you know themselves. They think the world and all of you, they do, and they'll be wanting you to take part in the fun.

[*There is a knock at the door, left.*]

REVEREND MARTIN: Come in! (*The door opens and John Stewart comes in.*) Well, John Stewart, how are you? It's good to see you!

JOHN: Hello, Reverend Martin. I'm glad to see you. (*They shake hands.*)

REVEREND MARTIN: Come, take your things off, and get warm by the fire.

JOHN (*taking hat and coat off and putting them on a chair*): And Tim! Well, hello! You haven't forgotten me, have you?

TIM: Sure, and it's not likely I'd forget anyone who got himself into as much trouble with his pranks as you did when you were in the choir here. And how are you getting along with your grand newspaper job?

JOHN: Oh, fine! It's swell! (*He turns to the minister.*) Reverend Martin, you'll never know how grateful I am to you for getting me that job on the Chronicle. They're a swell bunch of fellows down there, and I'm learning a lot.

TIM: Well, I've got to get on with me work. Goodbye, lad, and don't forget to come see us again.

JOHN: So long, Tim. I won't. (*Tim goes out, right, carrying his cleaning implements.*)

REVEREND MARTIN: I'm glad you like the job, John. How long is it that you've been there, now?

JOHN: Six months, yesterday. And already they've let me go out on some stories. And on my own, too. That's what I came down here for, today. Did Tim tell you? Cobb, I mean the

city editor, said maybe he'd run something in the paper about the 100th Christmas anniversary celebration here at the church tomorrow.

REVEREND MARTIN: Well, come on over here and sit down. (*They go over to the desk and Reverend Martin sits behind it and John in the chair beside it.*) Now just what is it that you want me to tell you? (*John takes out a notebook and pencil and Reverend Martin begins hunting through papers in the desk drawers.*) I made some notes about the history of the church for my sermon tomorrow. Now, let me see, where did I put them?

JOHN: Yes, that's the sort of thing they want to know. (*Reverend Martin pulls out a paper and puts it on the top of the desk. John starts writing.*) Now let me see. Tomorrow is the 100th anniversary of the building of the church, that's right, isn't it?

REVEREND MARTIN: Yes, and 100 years ago this neighborhood was in the fashionable part of the city. Dr. James Watson, President Fiske from the University, and Cameron, who later became governor, lived here, and were among those who built the church.

JOHN: Didn't some famous architect design the church?

REVEREND MARTIN: Yes, Anthony Vail was one of the best men of his day. He and Dr. Watson, who was a very rich man, were good friends. And before the plans for the church were drawn, Vail and Watson traveled all over Europe together, visiting the famous cathedrals and churches. One of the things they brought back with them was the picture that hangs over the altar. Dr. Watson found it in some little town in Italy.

Now, let me see, what else can I tell you—maybe you'd like to mention the first minister of the church. Simon Rutherford was rather an exceptional man. He preached in this church for seventeen years, left here to go as chaplain with our troops in the Civil War, and came back after it was over, and preached for twenty years more before he died. You'll find his sermons in those volumes over there, if you're interested. (*He gestures toward the bookcase.*)

JOHN (*looks up from his notes, grins and shakes his head*): Well—er—not right now, sir. (*He makes a few more notes and there is a knock at the door, left. Reverend Martin goes to the door, opens it. Standing in the doorway is a poorly dressed woman.*)

REVEREND MARTIN: Oh, it's Mrs. Green, won't you come in? Mrs. GREEN (*steps inside and closes the door*): I can't stay. I left the children alone and I have to get back to them.

REVEREND MARTIN: Oh, I see. Well, is there something I can do for you?

MRS. GREEN: Oh, if only you could. But I don't know. Maybe there is somebody you could see. We're way behind with the rent, sir. My husband has been in the hospital, you know, and the landlord says he's going to put us out on Monday if we don't pay up. I haven't any money and I just don't know what to do.

REVEREND MARTIN: I'll stop by and see your landlord tonight, Mrs. Green. Now don't worry. I'm sure we can fix everything up all right.

MRS. GREEN: Oh, thank you, sir! You're so good. I don't know what the people in this neighborhood would do without you.

REVEREND MARTIN: I'm glad I can help. Now hurry back to your children, and don't forget to come to the celebration tomorrow morning.

MRS. GREEN: Oh, thank you, sir, thank you again. And I won't forget. Me and the children will all be 'there. (*She goes out, left.*)

REVEREND MARTIN: Goodnight. (*He closes the door and walks back to his desk, sits down, putting his head in his hands. In a moment he looks up, and smiles at John.*) Now where were we?

JOHN: I think I've got about enough, sir. (*He puts his notebook and pencil back in his pocket.*) They won't want a very long story in the paper. (*The sound of children's voices is heard at the door at the right, followed by a knock.*)

REVEREND MARTIN (*gets up and goes over to the door and opens it*): Well, hello, there. Come in. (*Jean, Mary and Bill come in. They are carrying Christmas wreaths and greens.*)

MARY: It's time for the carol singing, Reverend Martin. Everybody's here and we're all ready to begin.

REVEREND MARTIN: All right. I'll be along in a minute. This is my friend John Stewart; he used to sing in the choir here. Maybe he'll come in and sing carols, too.

JOHN: Hello. (*He gets up and smiles at the children.*) I think I'd like to come in for a while.

CHILDREN: Hello.

MARY: Would you like to stay afterwards and help us put up the Christmas decorations?

JOHN: I'm afraid I won't have time for that. I'll have to get back to the office before very long.

JEAN: Look, isn't this a pretty wreath? We're going to hang this one at the door.

MARY: And we've lots of evergreen for the windows. Yesterday we went out to the woods for it.

BILL: After we sing carols I'm going to help decorate the Christmas tree.

REVEREND MARTIN: That's splendid! And I'll hold you up so you can put the star on the very top. But run along now, we'll be in as soon as we finish talking. (*The two younger children go out, right. Mary hesitates in the doorway as Reverend Martin speaks.*) Oh, Mary! Is Tim out there?

MARY: I don't think so. We haven't seen him.

REVEREND MARTIN: Well, then, if it seems dark in the church, perhaps you'd better ask Mr. Lacy to turn on the top lights. He knows where the switch is, and those lights around the walls aren't very bright.

[There is the sound offstage of an organ playing Silent Night, and children's voices singing. Other carols follow until nearly the end of the scene.]

MARY: All right, I'll tell Mr. Lacy. And do please hurry! It isn't any fun without you. (*She goes out, closing the door behind her and Reverend Martin walks over to the desk and puts papers away.*)

JOHN: Is Mr. Lacy still here? He used to play the organ when I was in the choir.

REVEREND MARTIN: Well, after all, that's not so very long ago.

JOHN (grinning): I can see old Lacy yet, struggling with that balky old organ. He'd get mad as blazes when it would let out a squeak, and all the time he was trying to keep a saintly look on his face. . . .

REVEREND MARTIN: I'm afraid Mr. Lacy finds that organ very trying. But it's amazing how much music he can get out of it. Someday, when times are better, we must manage to get him a new one. (*There is a knock at the door, left. Reverend Martin goes to the door and opens it. Two children stand there. They are poorly dressed.*)

REVEREND MARTIN: Hello, there.

BETTY: Please, could we come help put up the decorations in the church and see the tree?

POLLY: We can't have any Christmas at our house because Pop

lost his job, but Mom said maybe you'd let us come help with your Christmas even if we don't come here to church.

REVEREND MARTIN: Why, certainly. We'll be glad to have you. Won't you come in here first, and get warm by the fire? (*The children come in and he leads them over to the fire.*) This is John Stewart, one of my friends. (*He points toward John.*)

JOHN: Hello, I'm glad to know you.

BETTY: I'm Betty Fry and this is my sister Polly. (*The children look uncertainly around.*)

POLLY: He doesn't look old enough to be one of your friends. (*She points at John.*)

REVEREND MARTIN: Oh, but age has nothing to do with being friends. When you get a little older, you'll find that out for yourself. (*Betty has been looking longingly at a plate of apples on the table.*) Hmm—er—how about an apple while you're waiting to warm up? (*He passes the plate of apples to the children. They each grab one and begin to eat ravenously. Reverend Martin and John glance at each other. John walks over and looks out of the window at the back.*)

BETTY: This is good.

POLLY: Mmm, yes. We didn't have any lunch, but Mom said maybe there'd be something for supper.

REVEREND MARTIN: You know, it will be quite some time before we begin hanging the greens. How would it be if you ran over to my house next door and told my housekeeper that I sent you over for some sandwiches and milk?

BETTY: Oh, gee, will it be all right?

REVEREND MARTIN: Of course. Just tell her I sent you. (*The children go out left, and Reverend Martin closes the door after them.*)

JOHN: Doesn't it get pretty discouraging, sometimes?

REVEREND MARTIN: Discouraging? Well, not exactly. I think it's saddening, rather than discouraging. There is too much for us to do to dare be discouraged.

JOHN: Is it always like this? All these people coming to you for help?

REVEREND MARTIN: More or less. It's been a hard year down here, you know.

[*The music, offstage, stops.*]

JOHN: Isn't there some sort of church fund to take care of people like that woman who come in here and those children?

REVEREND MARTIN: There used to be, but we spent the last of

it long ago. And there's been nothing to add to the fund for a long while.

JOHN: But there must be some way.

[The music offstage begins again and breaks off abruptly.]

REVEREND MARTIN: Yes, yes, of course there is. But sometimes the way takes finding—and faith to keep on looking for it.

[There is the sound of noise and confusion at the door, right. Children's voices call, offstage, "Get Reverend Martin! He's in the study! Tell Reverend Martin! Tell him to hurry!" There is a pounding at the door. Reverend Martin and John rush to the door and open it. Jean, Mary, Bill, and other children stand there. They are all very much excited.]

MARY: Oh, come quick! See what's happened!

REVEREND MARTIN: What's the matter? What is it?

JEAN: We saw it! We all saw it!

BILL: Come see! Come see the picture! *(He pulls Reverend Martin's hand.)*

MARY: It's a miracle! I know it's a miracle!

JEAN: Right here in our church!

REVEREND MARTIN: Steady now. What's all this about? Come tell me why you are all so excited. *(The children come into the room.)*

BILL: The picture's different! It's all changed!

JEAN: The picture over the altar! The one with the Virgin in it!

MARY: Only it doesn't have just the Virgin in it anymore. There are a lot of other people in it now!

JOHN: Hey, let me see this mysterious miracle! It sounds like good copy. *(He pushes by the children and rushes through the door.)*

MARY: It's a miracle just like you told us about in the story! Do come see it!

REVEREND MARTIN: I'm coming, but first, tell me exactly what happened.

JEAN: It happened just now. It began to get dark, so Mr. Lacy turned on the big lights.

BILL: And then we began to sing Silent Night.

JEAN: And then someone happened to look up at the picture over the altar, and then we all looked and we saw it was different.

MARY: Instead of the Virgin standing alone, there are a lot of

other people in it. We all saw it. Mr. Lacy, too. He just keeps staring and staring.

BILL: I saw it, too. (*He pulls at Reverend Martin's hand.*) Come on! It might go away again! (*Reverend Martin, an expression of bewilderment on his face, goes out, surrounded by the children. John comes in as they go out. He runs to the desk, picks up the telephone and dials a number.*)

JOHN: Hello, give me the city desk! (*He is very excited.*) Hello, Bill. Look, this is John Stewart. Let me talk to Cobb, will you? He'll want to talk to me about this. This is important . . . Hello, Mr. Cobb, this is John Stewart . . . I'm down at Trinity Church . . . You know, where they're going to have a Christmas anniversary celebration tomorrow. The church that's 100 years old . . . Well, look, there's something strange happening down here. A sort of mystery. They're saying it's some kind of miracle! No—no, don't hang up! I mean it—I'm sure about it, that is. Wait a minute and let me tell you about it, sir. There's an old picture over the altar, a picture of the Virgin. I think it's been here ever since the church was built. But now it's a picture of the Holy Family. I saw it myself, and so did a lot of other people . . . Yes, I thought someone might have put up a different one, but I looked at the frame very carefully and it's nailed right to the wall, and the canvas is fastened into the frame. I don't see how it could be, and besides, the picture of the Virgin is just the same, it's just that there are other figures in it now . . . Well, how about sending somebody else down to check on the story, Mr. Cobb? All right, I'll wait for him, here. (*He hangs up and puts the telephone down on the desk.*) It certainly looks like a mystery to me!

The CURTAIN CLOSES

SCENE Two

The next morning, Christmas morning, just before the anniversary celebration service. As the curtain rises a reporter is seen sitting in a chair at the fireplace; another reporter leans against the desk.

SCOTT: Yes, sure I've seen it. And it sure looks like a picture of the Holy Family to me!

JONES: What do you think about it?

SCOTT: I don't know what to think. All I know is that something mysterious happened to that picture.

JONES: Well, all the papers certainly ran the story in a big way. The headlines are screaming Modern Miracle and Mystery at Historic Church, and all that kind of stuff. (*He pulls out a newspaper from his pocket and looks at it.*) The *Chronicle* got the tip first. It seems one of their fellows was down here when they discovered it.

SCOTT: They seem absolutely certain it's the same picture. It was on the radio this morning, too—the story about it, I mean. Everybody in town is talking about it. And half of them are trying to get in the church to see the picture.

JONES: I wonder what the minister of the church thinks about the whole thing.

SCOTT: That's what I want to get an interview about.

JONES: Me, too. From what I hear, he's a pretty good guy, always helping the poor people in the neighborhood.

SCOTT: Looks as though he could use some help himself. (*He looks around.*) This place looks ready to fall apart.

REVEREND MARTIN (*entering right*): Good morning, gentlemen. I'm sorry I've had to keep you waiting. (*The two reporters jump to their feet.*)

SCOTT: Good morning, sir. I'm from the *Evening Sun*.

JONES: And I'm from the *Herald*. We'd like to ask you some questions about the—er picture, sir, if we may.

SCOTT: Just what do you think about it—the miracle I mean?

REVEREND MARTIN: Well—er, (*There is a knock at the door, left, and he goes to open it. A delivery boy stands there carrying two enormous baskets of food.*)

DELIVERY BOY: From Mr. John Cameron. (*He puts the baskets down inside the room, and goes off, closing the door. Reverend Martin looks puzzled and Scott goes over and looks at a card attached to the handle of one basket.*)

SCOTT (*reading*): My grandfather was a member of your church. May I have the privilege of sending Christmas dinner to someone in your congregation who might need it?

[*The telephone on the desk rings. Reverend Martin goes to answer it.*

REVEREND MARTIN: Yes, yes, this is Reverend Martin . . . Yes, you may tell the Governor we'd be glad to have him attend the service this morning. (*He hangs up as there is a knock at*

the door and Jones opens it. A large, well-dressed man is standing there.)

JOHNSON: May I speak to Reverend Martin?

JONES: Why, yes, I guess so. Come in.

JOHNSON (*comes in and Reverend Martin goes to meet him*): I'm W. W. Johnson of the Mountain Construction Company. (*They shake hands.*)

REVEREND MARTIN: How do you do.

JOHNSON: I heard about your church over the radio this morning, and about the miracle that happened here. Astounding thing! Heard about the work you've been doing down here, too. Made an impression on me! And I came right down here to tell you that I think I can find jobs for any men you might care to send up to me. (*The telephone rings and Scott answers it. He puts his hand over the mouthpiece until Johnson finishes speaking.*)

SCOTT: It's for you sir. (*To Reverend Martin.*)

REVEREND MARTIN: I'm sorry, I'll just be a minute. (*He takes up the telephone.*) Yes, yes, this is Reverend Martin—

JOHNSON: That's all right. Just remember what I said. Send up as many men as you like on Monday. I'll find something for them to do.

[*He starts to go out, left. Reverend Martin nods, and the reporters stop him.*

JONES: May we quote you on that, Mr. Johnson?

JOHNSON: No, that's just between the Reverend, here, and me. (*He nods and goes out, left, brushing shoulders with a Western Union telegraph boy. The boy holds a sheaf of telegrams for which Jones signs as Reverend Martin continues his telephone conversation.*)

REVEREND MARTIN: Oh, the Hemisphere Broadcasting Corporation . . . yes . . . I think I understand. You want me to give a talk over your networks about our picture. Well I hardly think I could . . . yes, I realize that it's a large sum of money that you're offering me, but—suppose I think it over. Oh, you want it to go on the air tonight? Well, just give me a minute, will you? (*He bows his head and closes his eyes, as though thinking.*)

[*The doorbell rings and Scott opens the door and takes a large box from a delivery boy. He puts it down on the floor beside the baskets. The door at the right opens and Mary and Jean enter, dressed in choir robes. They look at Reverend*

Martin and then at reporters, who put their fingers to lips and the girls tiptoe out. There is another knock at the door, left. Scott opens it and a girl and a man come in. The girl is carrying a camera and photo flash bulbs. They all talk in undertones.

REVEREND MARTIN: Yes, I'm still here. And yes, I'll give the talk for you, on the condition that the money be spent for the needy here in the neighborhood. All right, I'll be there at 9 o'clock. (*He hangs up.*)

JONES: Gee, that's swell.

SCOTT: Can we use that, Reverend Martin?

REVEREND MARTIN: I don't see why not. I'm—er—sorry to have neglected you so. (*He looks up and sees two strangers.*)

MISS THOMAS: I'm Martha Thomas from *Home Picture Service*.

DODD: And I'm Dodd from *Pacific Press*. Can you give us an interview, sir?

MISS THOMAS: And may I take some pictures?

SCOTT: Whoa—Reverend Martin's been so busy he hasn't got around to talking to us, yet, but if you're good you can listen.

JONES: Been a little busy down here this morning, hasn't it?

SCOTT: I'll say it has.

REVEREND MARTIN (*seeing package near door*): What's that?

SCOTT: Toys, I think. At least that's what the boy who brought it said.

REVEREND MARTIN: Oh, so . . . Well, I know some children who will be glad to have them. (*He glances at the clock.*) It's very nearly time for the church service. I'm afraid I won't have time to talk to any of you now. But if you'll come back afterward I'll see you then.

MARY (*knocks at the door left, opens it, and then puts her head inside*): Mr. Lacy wants to see you about the music, Reverend Martin.

REVEREND MARTIN: Tell him I'll be right there, Mary. (*Mary disappears, leaving the door open slightly.*)

SCOTT (*putting on his hat and coat*): Oh, yes, yes, sure, we'll come back later.

MISS THOMAS: We'll come back later, too. (*She goes out with Dodd.*)

JONES: Would it be all right if we went to the service? (*He puts on hat and coat.*)

REVEREND MARTIN: Certainly. I'll look for you.

JONES: Well, see you after it's over then. (*He and Scott go out.*) [Reverend Martin sits down at his desk and looks through the

papers for his sermon. He finds it and begins to look through it when Tim comes in at the door right. He stands awkwardly, shifting his weight from one foot to the other. Reverend Martin does not see him until Tim clears his throat, then he looks up.

REVEREND MARTIN: Oh, there you are, Tim. I'd been wondering where you'd got to. We've had a busy time around here this morning.

TIM: Yes, sir, it was that that I was wanting to speak to you about sir. If you could just give me a minute before church starts.

REVEREND MARTIN: Why, of course I can. What did you want to speak to me about?

TIM: Oh sir! (*He turns to stare in the fireplace.*) It's been heavy on my conscience, 'til I couldn't bear it. First I was afraid to tell, and then I knew I had to do it.

REVEREND MARTIN: What's been on your conscience, Tim? I can't help you unless you let me know what it is. (*He gets up and goes to stand beside Tim at the fireplace.*)

TIM: Oh, it's the picture of the Virgin, sir. Sure 'twas no miracle at all sir, 'twas myself that did it!

REVEREND MARTIN: Tim! What did you do!

TIM: But it was an accident, like! I was washing down the woodwork around the altar with some of that new paint-cleaner I'd got, and I thought I'd wipe off the frame of the picture. 'Twas awful dingy, sir. And the first thing I knew I'd splashed the cleaner all over the edge of the picture. And when I tried to wipe it off with my rag, sure the paint came off too, and I could see that there were other figures painted underneath. I don't know just what made me do it, but I just kept rubbing and wiping with the paint-cleaner and pretty soon the whole top picture was gone and there was another one underneath it, just as plain as day, only the Virgin herself was painted just the same. (*The excitement ebbs from his voice and he shakes his head and seems about to break down.*) So you see sir, 'twas just myself and the paint-cleaner. It wasn't a miracle, at all. (*Tim bows his head. Reverend Martin stares into the fire for a moment, then touches Tim gently on the shoulder.*)

REVEREND MARTIN: I'm not so sure, my friend, I'm not so sure. (*He speaks very slowly.*) God works in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

[*The CURTAIN FALLS as the organ plays and voices are heard singing a Christmas carol offstage.*

FALSE ALARM!

BY DANIEL REED

CHARACTERS

JOHNNY CROWELL

BILL VIONE

ALICE CROWELL

JIMMY PARKER

MRS. CROWELL

Time: About twenty-five minutes.

Place: New York City or any other large city in the world.

COSTUMES

The clothes worn by the actors are modern, everyday.

PROPERTIES

Large desk-table. School books with Geometry Book among them. Notepaper. Studio couch. Console table. Boxes of various sizes to denote presents. Leather billfold. Clock. A piece of paper money, real or imitation, to represent a \$50.00 Bill.

LIGHTING

A clever boy or girl who enjoys working with stage lights can achieve a very beautiful effect of the night light in the room and the city light through the window. The artist who will paint the city scene on the screen will have to work with the electrician.

SETTING

This is described by the author. The view of Lexington Avenue can be painted on a screen and set behind the window.

SETTING and THE PLAY

The curtain rises on the room of Johnny Crowell in the duplex Park Avenue apartment of the Crowells on an early June evening when most High School students are "cramming" for their exams. Johnny Crowell, whose age might be sixteen, is seated at the left of a rather large desk-table down center stage, poring over a Geometry book from which he is making occasional notes. Opposite him is Bill Vione, a dark, handsome lad, who seems older but is actually the same age. They have been studying together. Bill finishes first, closing his book with a bang, to sit back and chuckle at his friend's difficulties. Bill is obviously of an humbler social station than Johnny.

Aside from a large studio couch and bookshelves, the only other necessary furniture in the room, in addition to the desk at center, is a console table at the right which is heaped with various kinds of gifts suitable to a boy of Johnny's age and type. Chief among these is a leather billfold, containing a fifty-dollar bill. Johnny's initials are inscribed on the folder.

There are doors at lower right and left and a window at the back that opens on a fire escape. Across an areaway can be seen the rear view of the buildings on the avenue one block over, Lexington Avenue. This view is in contrast to what one finds on the swanky Park Avenue with its rich and modern apartment buildings. Across the areaway can be seen spots of light at windows, here and there, as one would see in any large city during the early hours of night.

JOHNNY (*seeing Bill is finished, speaks half to himself*): I'm about done too.

BILL: It's late. (*Sees clock on shelf.*) After 10:30.

JOHNNY: That's not late for this house. Wonder why Jimmy Parker didn't say goodnight to me. (*Poring over his work.*) I hope he's not sore . . . and divide that by two . . . gee, that works out O.K. . . . after you find out that equation you put me wise to—

BILL: Aw, I didn't help so much. Who's Jimmy Parker? (*Johnny doesn't answer at once.*) The fella you run around with?

JOHNNY (*finally looking up*): What's that?

BILL: Jimmy Parker—who's he?

JOHNNY: You know, the kid you generally see me with; he lives two doors down from here. Jimmy Parker, he's my best friend, I guess. At least I thought he was—till you turned up.

BILL: I used to think you didn't want to be friends with me.

JOHNNY: That's what I thought about you, Bill—till yesterday. Gee! were you standoffish!

BILL: Yeah—we could have been friends all along—if we'd really wanted to. (*He rises with a yawn and stretch.*)

JOHNNY: It took that Math Review of old Pop Austin's to get us really acquainted. Funny how things like that work out, ain't it?

BILL: Yeah, I always thought you were givin' me the ritz—you and your friends. (*He crosses to the window.*) My livin' on the street just back of yours didn't help much either, did it?

JOHNNY: Aw, Lexington's just as good a street as Park Avenue.

BILL: Not accordin' to some people, and not from the looks of the buildings either. (*He pushes the curtains aside for a wider view.*) Just look at the difference. (*He points excitedly.*) That's our place, right over there. See? (*Johnny joins him at the window.*) Where the light's still on—I'll bet that's my mother working in the kitchen.

JOHNNY: Want me to tell you somethin', Bill?

BILL: What?

JOHNNY: I've known that's where you lived—ever since we've been in school together.

BILL: Holy mackerel! Stop kiddin'. (*He turns and surveys the well-furnished room.*) I've often wondered which of these beautiful apartment houses you lived in.

JOHNNY: Well, this is it—if you want to call it beautiful.

BILL: This one room—gee! All yours. Why, you could get most of our apartment in this much space. (*He points down left.*) Where does that door go to?

JOHNNY: To my sister's room.

BILL: She's got a room all to herself, too?

JOHNNY: Sure, she's younger'n me—two years.

BILL: I don't think I've ever seen her, that is, to know who she was.

JOHNNY: Alice? I'll see if she's in—you ought to meet her.

BILL (*diffidently, thinking he should go*): Oh, I can meet her some other time. I better go now.

JOHNNY (*has reached the door at left*): It'll only take a second—

she won't bite you. . . . (*He knocks on the door and opens it simultaneously.*) She hadn't better try! Hey, Alice, are you still presentable?

ALICE (*coming to the door. She is an attractive thirteen-year-old blonde dressed in a long lounging robe*): How many times have I told you, Johnny, to wait until I answer before you open my door?

JOHNNY: Oh, you look all right. In fact, you're most beautiful. I've got someone here I want you to meet.

ALICE: That makes it all the worse. (*She stands haughtily in the doorway, fussing at her hair.*)

JOHNNY: Bill understands! You've got a sister, too, ain't you, Bill?

BILL (*smiling nervously*): Two of 'em. (*Both boys laugh heartily.*)

JOHNNY: Bill's last name is Vione. (*He attempts a formal introduction.*) This is my sister, Alice Crowell. (*He bows.*) [Bill and Alice acknowledge the introduction together.]

ALICE (*coolly*): How do you do?

BILL (*awkwardly*): I'm pleased to meet you.

ALICE (*after a slight pause*): You're Italian, aren't you?

BILL: My grandparents were. Both of my parents were born here, though. And my mother's folks were Irish. (*He laughs.*) We're mostly American.

JOHNNY: Sure, like us, I'll bet. A conglomeration!

ALICE: Mother says we're mostly English, Johnny, and you know it.

JOHNNY: And what does father say when she pulls that stuff?

ALICE: Oh, Johnny, you make me so mad!

JOHNNY: We're a little bit of everything, Bill. Dutch and Scotch, some Irish, and German, too—but our folks started out 'way back in this country—so we ought to be Americans by now!

BILL (*laughing warmly*): Sure, we're all a mixture of some kind or other.

ALICE (*childishly clinging to her point*): I don't know about you, brother, but I feel the British part of me—more than anything else!

JOHNNY: Maybe the British wouldn't feel so complimented if they heard you claim them so dramatically. (*He imitates her gesture.*)

ALICE (*walking toward her door*): I'm going to tell mother how

you talk, Johnny! (*A sharp knock on the window attracts their attention.*)

BILL: What the heck is that?

JOHNNY: Jimmy Parker—that's our signal. (*He crosses to open the window, which is locked.*) I thought "Old Jim" would be sayin' goodnight about now.

ALICE: And you know what father said about you boys using the fire escape to come and go.

JOHNNY: So what? (*He has the window open by now.*) Come on in, Jim, how's the world a-treatin' you?

[*Jimmy tumbles into the room. He is a companion-type to Johnny.*]

JIMMY: Boy, what's left of me, you mean! How'd you come out with that blankety-blank Geometry?

JOHNNY: You're a swell one to ask—after deserting me the way you did.

JIMMY: Desert, nothing! My mother stood over me—she wouldn't let me out of the apartment till I showed her the finished review. And then I had to sneak out—don't forget she used to be a teacher herself!

JOHNNY: Poor guy!

JIMMY: I'm lucky to be here now.

JOHNNY: You know Bill Vione. (*The two boys nod "hellos" to each other.*)

BILL: Kind of nifty for you fellows, I'd say, havin' a private entrance all to yourselves that way. (*He points to the window.*)

ALICE: Yes, very nifty. Father says it might give the wrong people ideas of how to break into our apartment, sometime.

JOHNNY: Gosh, sis, are you still around?

JIMMY: Our signals take care of that danger, don't they, John?

JOHNNY: Sure. I wouldn't unlock the window unless I got the right signal.

BILL: Besides, I shouldn't think the "wrong people" as you call them, would have to be shown anything about the use of fire escapes.

JIMMY: Gee, look at all the presents—all for your graduation? (*He examines them at the table.*)

JOHNNY: Naw, my birthday comes almost at the same time this year, so a lot of those are meant to go double. I lose out that way, don't I?

BILL: Tough luck. (*Joins Jimmy at the table, right.*) These don't look as if you lost out much.

ALICE (*signalling to get her brother's eye*): He's already got so many he won't have to get one from me—will you, brother?

JOHNNY: No, and I don't expect one from you either.

BILL (*picking up billfold—examines it*): Gee, a purse with your initials on it—that's something I wouldn't mind getting.

JOHNNY: That ain't all—look what's inside of it.

[*Jimmy and Bill open the billfold, looking inside it together.*]

JIMMY: Foldin' money! Now that makes some sense, doesn't it?

BILL: A fifty-dollar bill! I guess that's the first one I ever saw. Is it real?

JOHNNY: Guess it must be. My father and mother gave it to me.

JIMMY: How you gonna spend it? Decided yet? (*He tucks the bill back in the fold and returns it to the table.*)

JOHNNY: Oh, I'll find plenty of ways to get rid of it, don't worry.

ALICE: The loose way you leave it lying around you might not have a chance to spend it. Someone else might beat you to it.

JOHNNY (*looking at Alice suspiciously*): Guess I know who'd like to, at that!

ALICE: I don't have to spend your old money—I have plenty of my own.

BILL: Well (*He crosses to gather his books, etc., at the center table.*), I'm going home before my folks start wondering about me.

JIMMY (*going towards the window*): Me, too; I only came over to see how you came out on that review, Johnny.

JOHNNY: Don't both of you go at once. What's your hurry, Jim?

BILL: I wish I could get over to my house as easily as Jim can to his. By that private entrance—

JOHNNY: Maybe you can—we'll have to work it out in daylight sometime.

JIMMY (*peering into the dark outside*): I don't think there's a chance, though, maybe you can—

JOHNNY: I'll put you wise to our signals, Bill, just in case—

BILL (*starting to leave by right*): I'll just go the way I came. So long to you all!

[*Alice and Jimmy nod "goodnight" to Bill.*]

JOHNNY: I'll show you out, Bill. The lower door—I'd like to have you meet my mother and father, if they're home yet.

BILL: What? You have two floors to your apartment?

JOHNNY: Sure—it's a duplex.

BILL (*as he leaves, followed by Johnny*): Gosh, these buildings are grander than I thought.

[*Alice, left alone with Jimmy, walks to center.*

ALICE: Isn't that simply awful, Jimmy—bringing roughnecks like that into the house?

JIMMY: Oh, that fellow's all right; he isn't so bad.

ALICE: But Johnny shouldn't get thick with people like that.

JIMMY: Guess we can't be too particular who we pick, when a guy needs help with his Math Exam.

ALICE: But he doesn't have to give him all your signals—and everything.

JIMMY: I wonder if it might be possible to get around the block, to Bill's street, over the roof-tops. (*He views the possibility.*)

ALICE (*crosses to the presents*): And showing him all his presents, too. (*She picks up the billfold.*) Especially this one—with the fifty-dollar bill that father gave to Johnny.

JIMMY (*not paying much attention to her*): Yeah, that's some present!

ALICE: What's to prevent a boy like that Bill from stealing it? (*She has taken the fifty-dollar bill from its place in the fold.*)

JIMMY (*has turned to watch her now*): Oh, he isn't that kind of a kid, I'm sure.

ALICE: How can you be sure? You know that people as poor as he is resent our kind of people having money; you just know it!

JIMMY: I'll bet he hasn't even thought about it.

ALICE: Oh, yes, he did. You could tell by the things he said.

JIMMY: You sound as bad as my mother.

ALICE: And you sound just as bad as Johnny—wanting to make friends with ordinary toughs like that.

JIMMY: He isn't any friend of mine. (*He resumes his study of the fire escape.*) I'm not going to lose any sleep over him.

ALICE (*stealthily tucking the fifty-dollar bill into her gown*): What do you think mother is going to say to such a friendship? (*She has replaced the billfold casually on the table.*)

JIMMY: Maybe your folks would like Bill Vione.

ALICE: Well, I don't care, I'm going to try to break this friendship up before it goes too far. (*Her hand on the hidden bill in her gown pocket, she crosses to the door of her room.*)

JIMMY: Oh, I think you're taking it altogether too big, Alice.

(He leaps to the fire escape platform.) I'm going to have some fun with Johnny.

ALICE: I'm going to see to it that he doesn't ask the boy here again.

JIMMY: Looks to me like you're all set to have a great big row.

ALICE: I should think you'd be the first to object, Jimmy, losing a friend—so easily.

JIMMY (with a warm smile): Who? Lose Johnny? I'm not afraid of that happening. Johnny's my best pal.

ALICE (with sinister implications): Looks like it, doesn't it? The way he's—taken up—with this common dago.

JIMMY: Oh, you're full of prunes, Alice, if you want to know the truth.

ALICE (hearing sounds from off right): Here's Johnny coming back.

JIMMY (boyishly): Let him think I'm gone. (*Shuts window from outside.*)

[Alice stands resolutely at her door down left.

Johnny enters at lower right, followed by his mother, who is a handsome young matron. She is dressed in a simple house-frock.

JOHNNY (speaking as they enter): And you should see how smart Bill is, mother; I just knew you'd like him.

MOTHER: I'm sure I'd like anybody you liked that much, Johnny.

JOHNNY (to Alice): Where's Jimmy Parker? I told him to wait.

ALICE (covertly): Looks like he's left, doesn't it?

JOHNNY: I'll fix him. (*He crosses to his papers at the desk.*) Look, Mom, Bill Vione gave me just a simple explanation—and it cleared up this whole blamed Math review.

MOTHER: How splendid, son. (*She examines the paper.*) How this takes me back!

JOHNNY: That's the kind of friend to have.

MOTHER (looking up at him): But, not exactly for a—boon companion, do you think, dear?

JOHNNY: I'd like to know why not!

MOTHER: Well, son, I must admit I can't tell you "why not"—if you don't see it.

JOHNNY: See what? What's there to see?

ALICE: Johnny can't see anything, where this new friend is considered, Mother.

JOHNNY (exploding): You shut up—Alice!

MOTHER: There, now, children!

ALICE: I won't shut up, and you can't make me!

MOTHER: Children!

ALICE: I'll tell mother. You should've heard what Johnny said about our family to that common Italian boy. He said we were just a conglomeration.

MOTHER (*laughing at the consequence of this*): But that's all we are, Alice dear, when you get right down to it.

ALICE: Well, I'm not.

JOHNNY: Oh, no, you're just better than everybody else!

MOTHER: Come now, both of you—stop this! You'd better go to bed, Alice, it's way past bedtime. (*She saunters to the presents.*)

JOHNNY: I would like to know why Bill Vione can't be one of my best friends.

MOTHER: Honestly, son, I can't give you any reason why he shouldn't be. I guess time alone can decide a question like that. We form our close associations with people after we've known them through a variety of circumstances and—after they've proven themselves to be—well, just what they are!

JOHNNY: Well, Bill's sure proven himself to be a darned good friend!

ALICE: Maybe you'll find out differently after you've known him for a while.

JOHNNY: Mother told you to go to bed, Alice.

MOTHER: I really think it's time for all of us to go to bed. (*She is glancing over the presents.*) You got some lovely gifts, didn't you, John?

JOHNNY (*joining her at the right*): I certainly liked the one I got from you and Dad.

MOTHER (*picking up the wallet*): Oh, this—we couldn't make up our minds, son, just what to give you—

JOHNNY: Especially the fifty bucks inside—that's wonderful!

MOTHER (*looking inside the billfold*): I'm glad to see you were thoughtful enough to put the money in a safe place.

JOHNNY: Safe place, heck—that's what the billfold's for—it's still right there!

MOTHER (*looking into the billfold carefully*): But, it isn't . . . Did you leave it here?

JOHNNY (*taking the billfold from her to see for himself*): Sure did!

ALICE: After passing it around for all his friends to look at.

JOHNNY (*suspecting his sister immediately, crosses to her*): Come on, Alice, 'fess up—what'd you do with it?

ALICE (*becoming very dramatic*): What did I do with it?

MOTHER: Now, Johnny, that's not fair.

ALICE: Why don't you ask some of the other people who were looking at it what they did with it?

MOTHER: Yes, Johnny, I'm sure your sister—

ALICE (*breaking in on her mother*): I don't think I have to mention any names!

JOHNNY: You hadn't better mention any names.

MOTHER: Who exactly was here tonight, Johnny?

JOHNNY: Just Bill Vione and Jimmy Parker, who came in later, and Alice—

MOTHER: You mustn't accuse your sister any more, Johnny!

JOHNNY: I'd like to know why not!

ALICE: When you pick up common alley-rats like this Bill Vione and bring them right into the house—what do you expect? You may trust your Bill Vione but I can tell you I don't. And I can see that Mother doesn't either.

MOTHER: You don't think that Jimmy Parker took it, do you, Johnny?

JOHNNY (*brightening with the idea*): Well, at that, he might have! Just to play a trick on me, to scare me! (*He starts toward the window.*) I can soon find out.

MOTHER: No, son, you mustn't at this hour. It's too late to call Jimmy over here—and your father has told you boys you must stop this use of the fire escape.

JOHNNY: I want to have this thing cleared up here and now. Please, Mother! (*He throws the window open.*) And Jimmy can help.

MOTHER: No, son, wait. (*She crosses to Alice.*) Alice, listen to me. Did you take Johnny's fifty-dollar bill—for any reason at all?

ALICE (*bursting into elaborate tears*): There you have mother suspecting me now!

[*Johnny's reply to his sister's outburst is a long low whistle from the window, sent as a signal.*

ALICE (*continuing*): What would I want with his dirty old fifty dollars. I have all the money I need, thank you! (*She has worked herself into a real tantrum by now.*) But, maybe he can switch the blame from his new friend by having everyone accuse me of stealing it! (*She pulls away from her mother*

who tries to console her.) But, I won't stand for it. (She exits into her room slamming the door after her.)

[Johnny repeats the signal at the window.

MOTHER: Really, Johnny, you must stop that. Both of you are carrying it altogether too far. Close that window, son. I insist! *(Johnny obeys her reluctantly. When the window is well-closed a low whistle from outside tells them Jimmy has heard and is about to enter.)*

JOHNNY: There, that's Jim.

MOTHER: What can you possibly hope to clear up tonight?

JOHNNY *(fiercely)*: That Bill Vione is not a thief!

MOTHER: But what if you find that he is?

JOHNNY *(desperately loyal)*: I just know he isn't.

MOTHER: You have to admit, son, that indications point in his direction as much as—

[A tap on the window turns Johnny up right.

JOHNNY: Here's Jim. We'll soon find out.

[Johnny has opened the window and Jim tumbles into the room.

JIMMY: Gosh, you sound excited! *(He nods "Goodevening" to Mrs. Crowell.)*

JOHNNY: I am. My fifty dollars has disappeared.

JIMMY: The heck you say!

MOTHER: When did you see it last, Jimmy?

JIMMY: Wait a minute—let me think.

JOHNNY: You're not tryin' to pull some kind of a gag, by any chance, are you, Jimmy me lad?

JIMMY: Who—me?

JOHNNY: Just to throw a scare, of course.

JIMMY: No, honestly. I saw it last, Mrs. Crowell—*(he crosses to the presents)* why, just before I left here a few minutes ago.

MOTHER: You saw the purse, you mean—there on the table?

JIMMY: No, ma'am, the bill itself. Alice had it—was looking at it.

JOHNNY *(triumphantly)*: After Bill Vione had left to go home?

JIMMY: Yes.

MOTHER: Let Jimmy tell us, John.

JIMMY: Sure, when you were taking him downstairs to show him out.

JOHNNY: I guess that proves, Mother, that Bill didn't take it.

JIMMY: Who says he did?

MOTHER *(to Johnny)*: Now, son, be careful.

JOHNNY *(deliberately)*: Alice. She's trying to—to—

JIMMY: Alice? The little varmint! I'll bet she's taken it just to give you a scare, because she had it—

JOHNNY: I was sure she had taken it, Mother. (*He starts toward Alice's door, at left, not noticing that it has been slightly opened by Alice, who is listening there.*)

MOTHER: Now, don't upset your sister any more tonight, Johnny!

JOHNNY: Me upset her? She has my fifty bucks, and I'm gonna—
[Alice flings the door open fiercely and steps into the room.

ALICE: Yes, I have it! (She flings the bill toward her brother.)
And there it is!

MOTHER: Alice, of all things!

ALICE: I took your old money just to convince you how easy it would be for someone like that Vione boy to steal everything in this house.

MOTHER: But, Alice, how horrid of you—how unfair!

JOHNNY (*retrieving the bill*): No matter how much harm it meant to him, you wanted us to think Bill was a thief!

MOTHER: Don't you know, Alice, that hurting a person's reputation or stealing his good name is worse than any kind of stealing in the world?

ALICE: What about my good name? I try to help you all out, and—and—(*she starts to wail again*) this is what I get. You all turn on me. (*She exits to her room.*)

JOHNNY (*starting after his sister*): But what a heck of a way to—

MOTHER (*stopping him*): There, now, son, I'll explain everything to Alice properly tomorrow.

JIMMY: Sure, I guess Alice meant all right.

JOHNNY (*flaring up*): I get so sick of that "meant all right" argument.

MOTHER: But, you'll have to stand for it, son. We all learn in time that most of the misunderstandings and troubles in the world—wars even—come from someone's very simple, but misguided good intentions! Fortunately (*she crosses to exit at the right*), this didn't go far enough to hurt your new friend, Bill Vione. It was just a false alarm, dear.

JOHNNY: It only makes him more a friend of mine than ever, Mother!

MOTHER: I'm sure it does. What does your old pal, Jimmy, have to say to that?

JIMMY: I say—any friend of Johnny's has got to be a friend of mine!

JOHNNY (*throwing forth his right hand which is grasped firmly by Jim*): Attaboy, Jimmy! Put it there!

[*The handshake degenerates into a rough and tumble and the CURTAIN CLOSES as Mrs. Crowell exits good-humoredly and the boys "carry on."*]

CHEATING CHEATERS

IN THREE SCENES

BY MAURICE RELOONDE

THOSE IN THE PLAY

VROUW ILSY, *Dr. Knipp's housekeeper*
DIEDERICK, *who does odd jobs for Dr. Knipp*
RULEFF, *Dr. Knipp's apprentice*
RAMM, *a young carpenter*
TIENCKEN, *his sister*
DR. KNIPP

Time: The play will run about forty minutes including the intermissions.

Place: New Amsterdam, in the good old days.

COSTUMES

All wear the clothes worn during the days of Peter Stuyvesant: breeches, coats, stockings, and buckled shoes. The women wear full dresses and blouses and little white (lace if possible) head-dresses. Most of the costumes are described in the play.

PROPERTIES

Large table and high-backed old chairs. Bookshelves, bureaus, clothes press. Skull, a stuffed black cat, and an owl. These can be made out of cardboard. Another black cat. This should also be made of stiff cardboard on a wooden frame and can be pulled across the stage when the action demands it. Bottles, colored if possible. Dried herbs, glass jars filled with drugs. Snakes and lizards, made out of cardboard and painted. Mortar and pestle, and books. A low, heavy looking chest. A package of large rimmed spectacles for Dr. Knipp. A half-broken chair,

table. Two armchairs. A large grandfather's clock. Coach. Candle and candlestick. Tinderbox (or imitation) for lighting candle. Two sticks. Small box. Key. A large low box. Two small, full bags. Two sheets.

LIGHTING

The first scene is played in full daylight. The second and third scene by eerie blue moonlight.

NOTES

The various animal sounds and bird's songs can be easily imitated. The clock can be made of heavy cardboard on a wood frame, or what is simpler, it can be painted on a screen so that it can be thrown down without any damage.

The whistling of the wind can be done on records or can easily be imitated by mouth.

THE PLAY

SCENE ONE

The large living room of Dr. Knipp's home, late in the afternoon. In the center is a large table with a few high-backed chairs around it. Along the walls are shelves and bureaus, and a clothes press. On the clothes press stands a skull, flanked on either side by a stuffed owl and a stuffed black cat. The shelves are covered with bottles, herbs, glass jars, drugs, etc. If possible have specimens of snakes and lizards. There is also a scale and mortar and pestle. One shelf has many books, most of them heavy volumes. Next to a shelf in a corner stands a low, heavy looking chest.

There is a door to the left and another center back. The latter has on each side a little window which hardly admits any light. For that reason, the room is in half darkness.
When the curtain opens, the stage is empty. You hear a voice outside.

ILSY (outside): Ruleff! Ruleff! Where are you, you miscreant?
(At the last word she enters from the street. She is short and stoutish. On her apron hang a bunch of keys. She is walking

around the room and looking behind chairs and under the table.) Where are you, you devil!

[Enter Diederick. *He is a tall young fellow; wears poor clothes: A dark brown shirt, colored heavy stockings, heavy shoes.*

DIEDERICK: Where is Dr. Knipp?

ILSY: What do you want him for?

DIEDERICK: He owes me money. I want it.

ILSY: He'll pay you. He'll pay you, Diederick, and soon. Come back later.

DIEDERICK: But when?

ILSY: Very soon. Come back.

DIEDERICK: Every time I come, he puts me off.

ILSY: You must know, it is hard for him to get money from his patients. He has to wait too.

DIEDERICK: He has plenty of money. Everybody says so and I know it. I want him to pay me what he owes me.

ILSY: He will, I promise you. You just come back later and he'll surely give it to you.

DIEDERICK: Very well. I'll be here soon again. You tell him.

ILSY: I will. I will. You come later.

[Almost pushes him out.]

DIEDERICK: I'll come back. He'll pay or he'll be sorry. *(He goes out.)*

ILSY: Well, I'm rid of him. But where is that devil Ruleff? I haven't seen him since noontime when I fed him like a pig. Where is that wicked dog?

[Ruleff sticks his head through the door. He's a young fellow dressed in breeches, brown coat, brown stockings and buckled shoes. His head is bare.]

RULEFF: Here, Mistress Ilsa, is that young, wicked dog. I've been here all the time only your eyes are in the wrong place, good woman, and you can't see so well.

ILSY *(in a fury):* Don't you woman me, you gallows bird! My eyes are in the right place. I've been looking all over for you. You've been hiding from me.

RULEFF: All you had to do was look a little harder. *(Entering with a flourishing bow.)* Now take a good look. Here I am, Mistress.

ILSY: Take the package of herbs at once to the house of Mynheer Peechy Prauw. They should have been there an hour ago.

RULEFF: Well, he'll have to wait another good hour. I must do something first for my mother.

ILSY: For whom are you working, for Dr. Knipp or for your mother? Wait till the Doctor gets home, he will tell you where to go, in the right way.

RULEFF: When he gets back, I'll tell him I'm not lifting another finger 'till he pays me the wages he owes me. When he pays me, I'll work.

ILSY: I tell you to take these herbs to neighbor Peechy Prauw.

RULEFF: Carry them yourself. If I don't get what he owes me, I'll go to the governor and complain. (*He runs out quickly.*
ILsy runs after him.)

[The gloomy room remains absolutely silent for a time. A cock crowing is heard, then there are heavy footsteps and Ramm and his sister, Tiencken, enter. He is a long gawky fellow. Tiencken is about fifteen, with a lovely rounded moon face in which large brown eyes shine brightly. Ramm stops at the door frightened to death, but Tiencken pushes him in. They stand still in the middle of the room. A cat runs across the room meowing.

CAT: Meow, meow.

RAMM: F . . . Fa . . . Father! (*He tries to turn and run, but Tiencken stops him by holding onto his coat.*)

TIENCKEN (*is frightened, too*): Ramm here we stay. We came and we'll. . . . (*She is stopped by a croaking of a raven.*)

RAMM: L . . . I . . . let's go!

TIENCKEN: No! We'll finish this. (*A rooster crows.*) This place is full of animals. I bet he cheats them too. I'm . . . I . . . I'm scared. If. . . .

[ILsy enters the room out of breath and sees Ramm and his sister.

ILSY: Oh . . . you . . . now you are here! What do you want, Master Ramm?

RAMM: I . . . I . . . I want t . . . t . . . to see M . . . M . . . M . . . ynheer Doctor K . . . K . . . K . . . Knipp.

ILSY: What's the trouble?

TIENCKEN: Plenty. We don't want to stay in his farm house.

RAMM: N . . . n . . . no we are g . . . g . . . going. It's h . . . h . . . h . . . haunted.

TIENCKEN: That's right. He can have his farm house. It's full of fiends, hobgoblins, and specters. Let him live there himself.

ILSY: What! you ingrates! Here Dr. Knipp gives you a fine farmhouse to live in free for a rickety table and six broken chairs you made for him and you refuse. That's a fine way to repay his generosity.

RAMM: H . . . h . . . he can have th . . . th . . . the t . . . t . . . table and ch . . . ch . . . chairs.

TIENCKEN: Don't you give them to him. I think we should make him pay for them in good money. (*To Ilsa.*) But Ramm made them. He has a right to do with them as he wishes. I would make that Doctor of yours pay, but live there we won't. We . . .

[*Dr. Knipp enters. He is a short, thin little fellow wearing a long black gown, a black velvet cap on his head, and large dark-rimmed spectacles on his nose.*]

DR. KNIPP: What's the trouble? What's all this noise! Can't I have a little peace? Here a woman needs a philter; comes along one with trouble in her nose; all women want something to stop their babies squealing. Lord! Life is hard! Now what do you want, Master Ramm? I suppose some free medicine. Well you can't get it. That's all there is to it. I paid you well enough for the table and chairs by letting you live free in my fine farmhouse. You mustn't ask for more.

RAMM: N . . . n . . . n . . . no, D . . . D . . . Doctor. W . . . w . . . we don't. We . . .

DR. KNIPP: Then it must be some other silly thing. Go! I cannot be bothered. I want you to leave at once.

RAMM: Th . . . th . . . that's just what I w . . . w . . . want.

DR. KNIPP: Then go. (*Screaming.*) Go, I say.

TIENCKEN: We'll go. We are leaving that accursed farm of yours. It's haunted and full of ghosts and goblins.

DR. KNIPP: What's that! What's that! My house haunted! Goblins and ghosts in my house! How dare you! Giving my house an evil name! I'll take you before the court. Ilsa, I smell sauerkraut. I'm hungry. Ramm, I won't take you before the court if you go. Go back. You are lucky I'm letting you live in my fine farm for the table and chairs. They are not very good chairs at that. They need re-pegging.

RAMM: I . . . I . . . I won't g . . . g . . . go back. You c . . . c . . . c . . . can have the t . . . t . . . table and ch . . . ch . . . chairs.

TIENCKEN: Ramm is too easy with you. I'd make you pay for

them, but we will go. You can have that broken old haunted place and live in it yourself. (*She takes Ramm's hand and drags him out with her.*)

DR. KNIPP: Hee-hee-hee-hee, Ilsa, now what do you think! Am I not smart! Don't I know how to get things without paying for them? That Mystery Farm of mine pays well. It pays with good interest. Hee-hee-hee.

[*The cat meows, the raven croaks and the rooster crows.*]

DR. KNIPP: You see all my fine animals agree with me. I'm a very fine thinking man. Thinking, I said. Ah, it's lucky that not too many suffer from that. Thank the Lord. Now for a fine meal of oysters and sauerkraut! Hee-hee-hee. Isn't life beautiful!

ILSY: It would be, if not for Ruleff, that apprentice of yours. That monster! That. . . .

DR. KNIPP: What has that scamp done now?

ILSY: He refused to take the herbs to Peechy Prauw.

DR. KNIPP: He did?

ILSY: He just wouldn't. He said he wouldn't go anywhere until you pay him what you owe him.

DR. KNIPP: Oh! is that so! Pay him! For what! For not obeying; for breaking things; for eating my good food! I'm not going to pay him, Ilsa.

ILSY: He said he would go to the governor.

DR. KNIPP (*in fury*): What! the scamp! the rascal! the thief! the . . . How dare he! The governor'll never believe his cock-and-bull story. Or . . . maybe he will!!

ILSY: I suppose that good-for-nothing'll bring in his widowed mother.

DR. KNIPP: Hm, hm, something must be done. . . .

ILSY: Yes, something must be done.

[*Dr. Knipp is silent for a time. The cat meows and the raven croaks. Dr. Knipp walks three times in a circle very solemnly and stops suddenly before Ilsa.*]

DR. KNIPP: The stars have told me that something *will* be done. Ilsa.

ILSY: Oh! you are wonderful, Dr. Knipp.

DR. KNIPP: Ruleff will never bother us again.

ILSY: It's too good to be true.

DR. KNIPP: He will never ask for money again. Never. (*Triumphant*ly.) I'll send him to the farm! (*Rubs his hands.*)

When the goblins and demons who pinch and pain are finished with him, he'll be glad to leave us . . . forever.

ILSY: You are a marvelous magician, Dr. Knipp.

DR. KNIPP (*tripping around*): There's a little rhyme: (*in singing song*)

He will never quarrel for riches,
Or any quite such glittering toys.
A light heart and a thin pair of breeches
Will go through the world, my brave boys.

He'll be singing that.

ILSY: That song is perfect. Oh, I forgot, Doctor, Diederick ~~was~~ here. He wanted some money.

DR. KNIPP: Oh! Oh . . . he'll get it. You go and fetch him at once.

ILSY: Sh . . . I hear someone . . . I think it is Ruleff.

[*There is a whistling outside and Ruleff enters.*

DR. KNIPP (*looking serious*): Ruleff, I hear you did not obey Ilsy.

RULEFF: I want to be paid. I need the money for my mother. All you've given me the last three months is promises.

DR. KNIPP: Now you'll get good silver money.

RULEFF: That sounds fine, Mynheer Doctor.

DR. KNIPP: But there is one thing you must do for me first.

RULEFF: Oh! it sounded to good to be true. What is it?

DR. KNIPP: That ingrate! that villain, numbskull and wood-butcher whom I let stay in my fine house for a few miserable pieces of furniture he made for me of raw wood won't live there any more.

RULEFF: I don't blame him. They say the house is haunted. It has a bad name. But what has that to do with me?

DR. KNIPP: Haunted! Fiddlesticks! It's a fine old farmhouse; good enough for the governor. You stay there a few nights. At least three. It's not good to leave a house un-tenanted. By that time, I'll have a new tenant. I'll then pay you what I owe you, and maybe a little more. If I don't, you can go to the governor.

RULEFF: You promise.

DR. KNIPP: You have my word.

RULEFF: I'll stay in the house, but remember Dr. Knipp, if you don't pay me I'm going to the governor.

[*Ruleff goes out.*

DR. KNIPP: Hee-hee-hee. Now he'll go the way Ramm went. When he gets through with three nights at the farm house he'll not want any money, I'm sure. I'm sure, Ilsy. Hee-hee-hee-hee.

[*The cat meows and the raven croaks as the CURTAIN CLOSES.*

SCENE Two

When the curtain opens, you see the large room in the Doctor's farmhouse. It has just one door and two windows. There is a little furniture in it. A few broken chairs are around a large table. Two large armchairs stand at the side. There is a big fireplace, and a large clock stands alongside it. A coach stands opposite the fireplace. The room is lit by the faint eerie light of the moon through the windows and you hear the croaking of frogs and the crying of katydids and the chirping of crickets. Occasionally, there is the cry of a whippoorwill.

After a few seconds, the door opens and Ruleff enters holding a candle in one hand and a stick in the other. He walks slowly to the middle of the room holding the candle high up. Under the yellow flare the shadows look eerie and frightening.

RULEFF (*loudly as if to gain courage*): So this is where I sleep!

[At the moment there is a terrific bang and a rush of wind. His candle is extinguished. The room is dark and you hear Ruleff fumbling with a tinderbox to light his candle. He finally succeeds and begins to walk around the room slowly, examining every piece of furniture. He gets to the clock and as he comes near it there is a terrific crash again. Ruleff stops, raises his stick high in defense, but all remains silent.

RULEFF: It must have been that door again. There's nothing to be scared of.

[He puts his candle in the middle of the table and goes to the window and looks out. There is a long-drawn wailing as of some animal. The wind is heard whistling through a slightly opened window.

RULEFF: They can't scare me.

[He begins to look around the room again. He comes to the couch, gets down on his knees and looks under it. Steps begin to be heard. They are slow and heavy.

Ruleff jumps up, listens tensely, holding on to his stick. The steps approach nearer and he extinguishes the candle and hides behind a tall chair.

A VOICE OUTSIDE: The . . . the . . . there is someone inside. I . . . I . . . I . . . I'm sure. W . . . w . . . we shouldn't have come.

[For a few moments there is silence and then a door opens cautiously and Ramm's head pokes in. Seeing no one, he enters followed by Tiencken. Both are scared.

RULEFF (*leaping out*): So you are the mystery ghosts!!

RAMM: L . . . L . . . L . . . Lord! R . . . r . . . run!

TIENCKEN: Mother Mary! (*She begins to scream and both run out.*)

RULEFF: Fools! It's me. Ruleff Hopper. Ramm! Tiencken! Don't be scared! (*He runs after them and soon returns pulling Ramm by the ear. Tiencken follows.*)

RULEFF: Fools, why did you run away! Of what were you scared!

RAMM: I . . . I . . . I . . . thought you we . . . w . . . we . . . were the ghost.

TIENCKEN: So did I.

RULEFF: That's exactly the kind of ghost there is here.

RAMM: Th . . . th . . . th . . . there is a r . . . r . . . real ghost here. The . . .

TIENCKEN: There are many. Wait until they get after you.

RULEFF: I'll wait. I'm not scared. What are you doing here?

TIENCKEN: Ramm left some of his carpenter tools and he came back to get them.

RULEFF: Why did you come at night? Why didn't you wait until tomorrow morning?

RAMM: T . . . t . . . tomorrow K . . . K . . . K . . . Knipp'll be here and he'll t . . . t . . . take 'em.

TIENCKEN: Or maybe the ghosts'll take 'em.

RAMM: M . . . m . . . maybe.

RULEFF: You are both silly. There's no ghost here. They are just in your heads.

RAMM: W . . . w . . . wait and s . . . s . . . see. He'll j . . . j . . . jump on you and b . . . b . . . beat you.

TIENCKEN: I tell you, Ruleff, this house is haunted. It isn't something Ramm just made up. We wouldn't leave just for that.

RULEFF: I'm staying, ghost or no ghost.

RAMM: L . . . l . . . let's go T . . . T . . . Tinka. (*He picks up a small box standing near the wall.*)

TIENCKEN: Come with us, Ruleff.

RULEFF: I'm going to stay here and get my money from the old miser.

RAMM: Y . . . you'll be s . . . s . . . sorry. G . . . g . . . goodnight.

RULEFF: Goodnight, Tiencken. Goodnight, Ramm.

[*They go out. Ruleff stands for a time listening to their footsteps then he says aloud "Goodnight" and lies down on the couch putting his arm across his eyes. For a time there is silence. Only the wind, the frogs and the crickets are heard.*

Suddenly there is a terrific crash. Ruleff leaps up and listens intently.

RULEFF (aloud): Who fell down?

[*The only answer is silence. He lies down for a time. No sooner does his head touch the pillow then there is a wild screaming and rushing of air. There follows a whimpering and whining and banging of pans. Again Ruleff leaps up and gets hold of his stick ready to strike, but nothing appears. He waits for a time but there is absolute silence and so he lies down again holding his stick in his hand. No sooner is he down than a heavy, measured step begins to be heard. There is the sound of wind rushing through his room and the candle blows out. The room is now only lit by the blue light of the moon.*

Ruleff stands listening. The heavy steps sound louder and nearer. Each step is now accompanied by a bang as of a hammer. Suddenly the door flies open, but no one is there.

Again there is silence for a time. Ruleff stands ready with a stick in his hand looking on all sides. Suddenly the clock falls down and there stands a ghostly figure all covered in white. It, the ghost, rushes out waving a stick wildly in the air.

GHOST (in ghostly voice circling around Ruleff): Fly! Away!

Run! This is my domain. Keep away from here. Keep away from Dr. Knipp who owns this mystery house, or it will fare ill with you. Don't come near the house. Don't come near the owner. Don't ask him for anything. Don't ask him for any money. Reememberrrr my warning or harrrm will come to youuu.

[*At first Ruleff is scared. Then he seems to loose his fear.*

RULEFF: Y . . . y . . . y . . . you ghost!! Why!! Why do you care if I ask him for money?

GHOST: Beeeware. Fly! . . . Run! . . . before I destroy you. Keep away . . . keep away . . . ask for nothing. . . . (He raises the stick in his hand.)

[At that Ruleff makes a flying tackle at the ghost, throwing him down. There is a scuffle and when it is over Ruleff is on top of the ghost. He takes the sheet off him.

RULEFF: Diederick! ! ? ! !

DIEDERICK (silent for a time, then sullen): Yes.

RULEFF: You . . . you . . . the ghost!

DIEDERICK: Yes, but you didn't have to knock me down so hard. You really didn't.

[Ruleff gets up slowly. So does Diederick.

RULEFF: But why do you do that?

DIEDERICK: Dr. Knipp pays me for it.

RULEFF: But why? It gives his house a bad name.

DIEDERICK: He said it got him rid of people who bothered him.

RULEFF: Oh. (Long-drawn.) Oh, I understand. (Slowly.) And those whom he owed money.

DIEDERICK: What do you mean?

RULEFF: Does he owe you any money, Diederick?

DIEDERICK: Yes . . . but he promised to pay.

RULEFF (thinking): He . . . he doesn't pay you much for playing this game? Does he?

DIEDERICK: No. The miser!

RULEFF: You shouldn't have done it.

DIEDERICK: It was an easy way to make a little money.

RULEFF: Oh!

[He walks up and down the room a few times, apparently thinking of something.

RULEFF (stopping suddenly before Diederick): Diederick, would you like to make now, tonight, more money than that miserly cheat Dr. Knipp would pay you for thirty nights' work?

DIEDERICK: That I would, indeed. How?

RULEFF: Very simple. Just play being ghost once more.

DIEDERICK: What do you mean?

RULEFF: Here is what I mean. It is early yet. If we run quickly, we can reach the doctor's house while it is night. You play the ghost once more and I'll do the same and we'll scare him

to pay us both plenty. That will teach him a lesson to cheat people by frightening them.

DIEDERICK: Oh, that's fine. I'll make him jump! That's fine.

RULEFF: Come, let's go quick. I'll take the sheet that's here. I've a key to get into the house. We'll teach that cheat a lesson. Come.

[They both go out as the CURTAIN CLOSES.

SCENE THREE

The same as Scene One about an hour later. The room is lit only by the eerie moonlight. As the curtain opens a ghostly figure all wrapped in white, hands outstretched, is seen standing at the fireplace.

From upstairs are heard hoarse whispering voices. The words are long-drawn, particularly the end letters.

VOICE: Downnn. Downnnn, downnn you gooooo into the bowels of the earth. There down, you'll meet Mynheer Cloven-hoof who will make a reckoning of your sinssss.

[After a few moments, Dr. Knipp is seen backing in through a door so that he does not notice the other ghost. He wears a long night shirt and a tall white night cap with a red tassel at the end. Driving him is another tall ghostly figure.

DR. KNIPP (in a quaking voice almost weeping):
 Abacadabra, spirits of the air,
 The seven cabalas come and spare
 Me who have always worked for you fair.

FIRST GHOST (in a ghostly, hoarse whisper and very melodramatic): Stop that jabbering. You know it won't help.

DR. KNIPP: Who . . . who . . . who are you? Why are you here!

FIRST GHOST: I'm the real mystery of your haunted farm, you whelp. I've come to punish you for putting there a false ghost to cheat people of what you owe them.

DR. KNIPP: I never meant any harm. I swear. What, what . . . happened to Diederick . . . to Ruleff?

FIRST GHOST: Ah, Diederick! Ruleff! I turned them into real ghosts and they will haunt you every third night for the rest of your life.

DR. KNIPP: Oh! Oh!

FIRST GHOST (*sharp*): Turn! Look! Turn around. Here's another demon to greeeet youuuuuu.

[*Dr. Knipp turns around and sees the other ghost.*

DR. KNIPP: Lord have mercy on me! Father in Heaven! (*Sinks on his knees.*)

SECOND GHOST (*in a deep hoarse voice and also very melodramatic*): Woe! Woe to you Dr. Knipp.

FIRST GHOST: Aye, woe to you! You who have been cheating people all your life, who have been selling false drugs for good money.

SECOND GHOST: Who cheated those who worked for you, like poor Diederick.

FIRST GHOST: Your last hour has arrived and the only thing that can save you is to disgorge the money you have taken from people.

SECOND GHOST (*slow and deep*): Disgorge! Disgorge.

FIRST GHOST: Disgorge the money that's in that strong box, the money you have taken from innocent victims, and the money that you owe to everybody.

SECOND GHOST: Disgorge! Quick!

FIRST GHOST: Quick or I'll call a host of demons to torture you and punish you and pain and pull you.

DR. KNIPP: I'll give you the money. Please don't call more demons. I'll give you the money.

FIRST GHOST: Quick! Time is flying! Quick, or you'll be flying down, down deep where brimstone and boiling pitch awaits you.

[*Dr. Knipp rushes over to the box which stands in the corner, fumbles with the key and finally opens it. He takes out two full bags and flings them on the floor. Both ghosts make a dash for them. The first ghost gets the larger bag, the second, the smaller.*

SECOND GHOST (*forgetting and dropping his sepulchral voice*): Ruleff, you are taking the bigger bag.

FIRST GHOST (*also forgetting his part and in his own voice*): It was I who thought of the scheme first.

DR. KNIPP: What! What! What's that? Diederick! Ruleff! (*He runs up to them and pulls their sheets off.*)

DR. KNIPP: Ah, you cheats! You thieves! Playing ghosts to rob me! (*Triumphant.*) Ha, but I caught you. You'll hang for that. To the governor you go.

RULEFF (*in a sing-song voice*): Not so quick, Dr. Knipp. Not so fast.

DR. KNIPP (*sputtering*): You . . . I . . . hand back those bags of money!

RULEFF (*still in the same sing-song voice*): Not so quick, sweet Dr. Knipp. If you go to the governor, we'll go to the governor, too. We'll tell him of your little mystery-ghost game at your farmhouse to cheat people of what you owe them. Maybe it'll be you who'll dangle on the gallows . . . high. Ha-ha-ha. (*With mock politeness and bowing deeply.*) Good night, Dr. Knipp. Dr. Knipp, don't cheat again. Good, sweet doctor, don't cheat again (*in the same manner*), lest you be cheated by other men.

[*They both go out bowing deeply.*

Dr. Knipp stands moaning and wringing his hands. Ilsa enters in a white nightshirt and a white cap.

ILSY: What's happened? What's wrong, Dr. Knipp?

DR. KNIPP: They robbed me! Oh! they robbed me!

ILSY: Who?

DR. KNIPP: Ruleff! Diederick.

ILSY: What! take those thieves to the governor.

DR. KNIPP: I can't.

ILSY: Why not?

DR. KNIPP: Oh! Oh! They might hang *me* for it.

[*Ilsa looks at him speechless as the CURTAIN CLOSES.*

GHOST TO GHOST

BY MARION A. TAYLOR

CHARACTERS

TERRY NORTON, a writer of detective fiction

JEAN, her sister

THE GHOST OF HANNAH WARBURTON

THE GHOST OF HILDA VON BOCK

Time: The play will take about twenty minutes.

Place: An old deserted house in the country.

COSTUMES

Jean and Terry wear modern clothes. Hannah Warburton wears "frills and furbelows of the gay nineties," as the author states. You can easily take some modern clothes and by making the sleeves larger and adding material here and there give them the appearance of those worn in these happy days. Her costume should be as gay as possible. Hilda Von Bock should wear similar clothes but all in dark colors.

PROPERTIES

The properties required are old, dusty shrouds. A few faded old paintings of "ancestors." (See the suggestions by author.) A flashlight and a guttering candle. Large suitcase. Portable typewriter. Large white shoe box. Rusty chains. Can be imitated in paper.

LIGHTING

Maintain dim light throughout the play.

SETTING

The scene is a deserted living room in a spooky old house. The massive pieces of furniture are covered with eerie white shrouds, long since turned to grey with dust and grime. At the left is a winding staircase leading to the cavernous shadows which constitute the upstairs. At the center back is a creaky door, sagging on its hinges. To the right is the exit leading to the front hall. On the crumbling walls, from which the once gay, large-patterned paper is hanging in strips, are several faded oil portraits of austere-looking family ancestors, festooned with cobwebs. One above the mantelpiece catches the eye, that of an amiable-looking dowager, who wears the frills and furbelows of the gay nineties. Nearby is another portrait showing the forbidding face of a middle-aged woman with a stern, Germanic face. The blinds to the windows are drawn, but small arrows of sunlight stab their way through the holes in the fabric, affording the only feeble illumination.

THE PLAY

As the curtain rises, there is a slight commotion offstage, right, and then the sound of the opening of a moaning door. Two young and pretty girls in modish traveling clothes make their way onto the stage, first the younger one, Jean, staunchly holding a flashlight, and then the older one, Terry, clutching a guttering candle. Jean is also lugging a huge suitcase, while Terry carries a portable typewriter and a large, white shoe box, tied up with string. Jean's eyes gleam with adventure, but Terry is patently frightened.

JEAN: Welcome to your summer palace, Terry. How do you think you're going to enjoy your month's vacation in this cozy little lodge in the mountains? (Sets down her bag.)

TERRY (her teeth chattering): I don't think this was such a good idea after all, Jean.

JEAN: Why, what's the matter with you? Here's Terry Norton, the celebrated author of such detective thrillers as "The Mystery at Sleepy-Eye" and "The Case of the Secret Panel" and "The Ghost Walks Again." She isn't scared, is she?

TERRY: Listen, Jean. It's all very well to sit down in a cheerful

little apartment in New York City and spin out detective yarns for a living, but getting yourself into a haunted house is another thing.

JEAN: Let me remind you, my dear sister, of the events leading up to the Norton girls taking this chummy little place in the Adirondacks to study the natives. (*Terry starts to exit right.*) Oh, no, you don't. You come right back here. And don't drop that lunch box.

TERRY: But how did I know the house'd look like this? We're not going to meet natives. We're going to be haunted by ghosts.

JEAN: You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Here your editor offers you this property of his, rent free so that you can get away from mystery stories and write the Great American Novel, big, fine, and rural, and what do you do? Start to run away.

TERRY: Yes, but look at the place. It's nothing but a setting for a detective story, and I'm sick of detectives. I don't like it, I tell you, and I'm going to leave. (*Starts to exit right again.*)

JEAN (*grabbing her*): Come right back here, and pull yourself together. This place looks exciting. Besides, did you ever stop to think that while you're writing the Great American Novel, one H. H. Van Spine might scoop you and bring out the Great American Detective Story?

TERRY: Nonsense, Jean. That hack Conan Doyle can't touch me with a ten-foot pole. I've got my public sewed up.

JEAN: Well, he was fast catching up with you, and if you rest on your laurels doing this other thing, he might put you in a back seat.

TERRY: Stop getting your metaphors mixed, Jeanie. He can't, I tell you.

JEAN: Don't be too sure. He'd do anything to get ahead of you.

TERRY: Let him. He can't.

JEAN: Your woman's logic is certainly beautiful, Miss Norton. But anyway, the mere thought of H. H. Van Spine has made you forget your ghosts for a moment. Come on. We might as well make ourselves at home. I'm going to pull up the blinds.

TERRY: Oh, Jean. W-w-what's that over there?

JEAN (*brandishing her flashlight*): Where?

TERRY: Right over there!

JEAN: I don't see anything.

TERRY: There's something moving behind the sofa. I saw it.

JEAN (*investigating*): Terry! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. It's nothing but a poor little mouse. And he's much more frightened than you are.

TERRY: Thank goodness. But then, I never did like mice.

JEAN (*darting her flashlight along the walls*): If you're interested in antiques, Terry, my love, your heart should thrill to these chromos on the walls. Look at this picture of Fuss-and-Feathers over the fireplace. Her face is amiable, but we'll probably find out she was murdered, or something.

TERRY: Stop it, Jean! I'm nervous enough without mentioning murder.

JEAN: Whew! See that Sour Puss in the picture next to her. She looks capable of anything. She's probably the one that did the murder.

TERRY: Ugh! Stop it!

JEAN: Well, as I was saying, let's get down to the job of pulling the blinds and making ourselves at home. Hhmm! Fine thing. This one is nailed down.

TERRY: And so is this one.

JEAN: Whoever closed this place up must have been opposed to the hygienic properties of sunlight and fresh air.

TERRY: Listen, Jean. We could still jump in our car and get back to the next town by dark.

JEAN: Not me. You can go if you want to, but I'm staying. This house intrigues me. Besides, we owe it to your editor to add a few housewifely touches around here. Just look at the dust! This place hasn't been cleaned in centuries.

TERRY: Well, if you stay, I'll stay, but I must admit that I don't like it.

JEAN: Good. I always thought you had the stuff in you, Terry. And another thing. We'll have to oil the hinges on all these doors. Did you notice how the front one creaked as we came in?

TERRY: Yes, but that's wonderful for the setting of a detective story.

JEAN: Well! I thought you were interested in nothing but the Great American Novel, Terry.

TERRY: Oh, I guess you're right.

JEAN: Get your nail file out of your purse and help me pry these blinds loose. Then after we get some light in here, we can explore the rest of the house.

TERRY (*setting down her candle*): All right, Jean. I'm beginning to feel a little better, now.

JEAN: I knew your detective blood would rise to the occasion, sooner or later.

[As the two girls are pounding away at the window blind, right, a ghostly figure which looks exactly like the woman in the portrait over the mantelpiece, comes gliding down the stairs, left. The girls, all unaware of her presence, continue their work until the ghost gets half way down the stairway. Then she moans and clanks some rusty chains on her wrists.]

TERRY: Oh, look, Jean. It's a ghost! *(She starts to run right.)*

JEAN *(catching her):* Oh, no, you don't. You're going to stay right here. *(Whispering.)* Don't let her think you're scared.

TERRY: But I am. And yet I have to admit I *am* intrigued. All this would be perfect for a detective story.

JEAN: Sure it would. And doesn't it strike you as being a bit strange that a ghost would come out in the daytime? I always thought they disappeared with the dawn or something.

TERRY: Ghosts usually do. But this may be a new variety. It should be very interesting to study.

JEAN: Atta girl. I always knew your good old detective blood would come to the fore.

TERRY: Look at the way she just stands there, staring at us.

JEAN: Let's call her over and have a chat. *(As if calling to a dog.)* Yere, ghost! Yere, ghost. Come on, ghostie.

TERRY: Well, of all things! She's coming.

JEAN: Come on, ghostie! That's a good ghostie!

TERRY: Look. She's dressed exactly like that picture over the mantelpiece.

JEAN: It's a funny thing to me how you can scare at a mouse, Terry, and get interested in a ghost.

HOST OF HANNAH WARBURTON *(in a low, sepulchral tone):* Who are these mortals that break in upon the ancestral home of the ghost of Hannah Warburton?

JEAN: How do you do, ghost. So glad to meet you. I'm Jean Norton and this is my sister, Terry. You may have heard of her. She writes detective stories.

TERRY: How do you do.

HOST: Shades of another world, you are welcome. But what brings you here to this desolate countryside?

TERRY: I—I—I was going to write a book. Here in this house.

JEAN: Yes. The Great American Novel. She's tired of thrillers.

HOST: Then let me open wide the portals, but let me also warn you. I cannot rest. I must walk, walk the ramparts. I am always hunting—hunting—*(moans.)*

JEAN: Oh, that's perfectly all right. Just walk all you please.
I've no doubt that after the grave, ghosts need exercise.

TERRY: But what is it you're hunting?

HOST: I'm seeking the ghost of my sweetheart—a man who
was murdered!

TERRY: Murdered!

JEAN: How messy!

HOST (*sepulchral tone*): Aye. He was murdered with an axe—
right in this room.

TERRY: W-w-where?

HOST: About where you're standing.

TERRY (*shrieks and sidesteps*): O-o-oh!

JEAN (*reprovingly*): Now, Terry. Calm down. But how about
you? You must have been killed, too, to get to be a ghost.

HOST: Yes. I—I shot myself—near where you're standing.

JEAN (*groaning*): O-o-oh! I must say this room has some lovely
associations.

TERRY: I'm leaving right now.

JEAN (*grabbing hold of her hand*): Nonsense. We're going to
see this thing through. But look (*consulting her wrist watch*),
it's getting late. If our spiritual friend doesn't mind, I think
we should be on our way upstairs to find ourselves a place
to sleep before it gets dark.

TERRY (*miserably*): Not me.

JEAN: Where do you sleep, ghost?

HOST: Sometimes in the attic, sometimes on the ramparts.
Then, again, ~~my~~ sleeping quarters are the roof, the sky, the
trees, the winds.

JEAN: No wonder you don't get any rest. And you look pale, too.
You probably have anaemia.

HOST: Mortal, I have but the pallor which is habitual to the
shades.

JEAN: Well, I still think you should see a doctor at least once a
year for a check-up. By the way, who is your doctor?

HOST (*hesitation in tone*): My doctor? Yes—my doctor. Well,
I used to consult either Galen or Hippocrates, but lately I've
been going to Oliver Wendell Holmes. The elder, of course.

JEAN: Oh, I see. You should be in good hands, if that's the case.
Well, we must be getting on upstairs to find ourselves a place
to park for the night. Come on, Terry.

TERRY: All right. If you'll go first.

HOST: Mortals, pause a moment in your hasty flight. What is it that reposes in yonder white shoe box?

JEAN: Why, ghostie! That's a picnic lunch. You see, we didn't know what the cooking facilities might be around here, so we thought we'd pack a little food to bring along.

HOST: You—you weren't thinking of eating soon, were you?

JEAN: Truth to tell, I *am* a bit hungry. How about you, Terry?

TERRY: That might not be such a bad idea. At least, we wouldn't have to go upstairs for a while, then.

JEAN (*suspiciously*): It couldn't be possible, ghostie, that *you're* hungry!

HOST (*loftily*): My usual fare is the repast of the immortals: ambrosia; manna; and nectar. But every now and then I yearn for earthly delights—a ham sandwich, say, or a cup of coffee.

JEAN: I should think you could haunt a hot-dog stand anytime and help yourself. But, of course, that's none of my business. Just have a chair, ghostie, and we'll all have a bite of lunch.

TERRY: I must say this is the first time I've ever dined with a ghost.

JEAN: Well, don't think this is an everyday occurrence with me, either.

HOST: Sated with the banquets of the Caesars, I long for the sight of the contents of yonder box.

JEAN (*opening the lunch box*): Well, what'll you have? Ham on rye, or cheese on white?

HOST: I find that the mention of the rye titillates my imagination.

JEAN: There you are. And you, Terry?

TERRY: I'll take a cheese, Jeanie . . . Thanks.

JEAN (*taking out a thermos bottle and some paper cups*): Coffeefee?

HOST: Aye. I shall deign to taste your worldly ambrosia. (*Jean pours and the ghost sips.*) Ah, this is nectar fit for the immortals.

TERRY: But I must say that's quite a mortal appetite you have there, ghost.

HOST: That is because I must forever walk—walk the ramparts.

JEAN: I can see how all that exercise would make you ravenous. But don't those chains bother you when you eat?

GHOST: Yes, but I must wear them always. You see, they are part of my costume—er—I mean, my doom.

TERRY: You know, all this would make a ripping good story. (*Getting a notebook and pencil out of her huge purse.*) Tell me, ghost, what do you do with yourself all day long—er—I mean all night long?

GHOST (*still eating ravenously*): Well, of course, I'm an active member of the Ghost Haunting Union of America. We make a specialty of criminals, people with hallucinations, and those with bad consciences. Then for a long time, too, I had a cemetery routine.

TERRY (*taking this down*): Oh, I see. Do you work alone, or with someone?

GHOST: For a century and a half I wandered about with the Ghost of Banquo, but the theatrical bug returned to bite him and he went back to the Drury Lane Theatre.

JEAN: And then what did you do?

GHOST: Oh, I just flitted about here and there by myself, mostly on Hallowe'en detail, until the war broke out.

TERRY: The war! How in the world does that affect you?

GHOST: Well, you see, most of us ghosts have been drafted into the army. We're needed to haunt Japs. And those of us who can qualify with at least a century and a half of first-class experience are to be sent over to haunt Hitler and his high-ranking Nazis.

TERRY: Have any of you started to do that yet?

GHOST: Oh, yes. A week after Pearl Harbor, a battalion of our most terrifying spirits were sent right over to Germany to work on anything they could find. It wasn't long before members of the German High Command were dying of apoplexy and heart failure with nice regularity. Several of our boys have already received the Distinguished Service Haunt to pin on their shrouds.

JEAN: Good. And do they take women as well as men for jobs like this?

GHOST: Oh, yes. Women can haunt just as well as men and sometimes better. I expect to be sent out any day now.

TERRY (*scribbling away*): Well, I must say this is all very interesting. How about giving me another sandwich, there, Jean?

JEAN: Certainly. Here, help yourself. And you, too, ghost.

GHOST: Don't mind if I do. And what is yonder dark substance covered by the white foam?

TERRY: Oh, that's chocolate cake. Do have a piece.

GHOST: Oh, thank you. (*Biting into it.*) Um-m-m, but this tastes good. It beats manna all hollow.

TERRY: There's one thing that's been troubling us, Ghost. How come you're out in the daytime? I thought ghosts usually haunted at night.

GHOST: Well, as a matter of fact, it's been necessary lately for me to be on a double shift because (*Mysterious tone of voice.*) I've been having a little competition in this house lately.

JEAN: Just what do you mean?

TERRY: Not—not another ghost!

GHOST: Exactly.

TERRY: O-o-oh! Just when I'm getting used to one ghost, don't tell me another has to show up.

JEAN: I hope it's a man this time. With so many of our boys in the army, I'm getting homesick for the sight of a masculine figure about—even if it is a ghost.

GHOST: I'm so sorry to disappoint you. But this second ghost is a woman. And I'm afraid she's not as amiable a spirit as I am.

JEAN: Why, what do you mean?

GHOST: You will soon be able to see for yourselves. For I feel her gliding, gliding hither. (*Low tone.*) See here. I like you two young mortals, and I would not have you come to evil. In my hands your lives would be safe. We three could live here cozily, and I would promise not to haunt you. But I must warn you that such is not the case with this other ghost, who is an evil denizen of the underworld.

TERRY: What do you think we'd better do? Leave?

GHOST: No. Stay with me and perhaps we can rout her and rid the world of a dangerous creature. (*Low tone again.*) She is already in the upper chambers of this house. But continue to eat your sandwiches as though nothing has happened. We must not show fear, or we shall be under her supernatural power.

JEAN: Do you think you can stand up under the strain, Terry?

TERRY: Certainly I can. I think all this would make a rattling good detective story, and I want to see how it turns out.

JEAN: Fine.

GHOST: Hush! Here she comes, slinking along the stairway.

[A second ghostly figure, an exact duplicate of the forbidding woman in the second portrait, comes silently down the stairs. She darts evil glances at the intruders.

SECOND GHOST (*sepulchral tone with a strong German accent*):

Rash mortals, you have the bounds of earthly realms o'er-stepped. For thiss iss the haunt of the evil shadows of the underworld. Donnerwetter! And you, the ghost of Hannah Warburton, will have to answer for your deed unhallowed of welcoming them here. I will speak to the devil about it when he calls his council at midnight.

JEAN: Not very hospitable, is she?

TERRY: Listen, you, whoever you are. My editor said we could stay here for a month and he owns the place.

SECOND GHOST: Ach! You will soon find out who iss master here, your editor or me. I warn you. Fly before it iss too late.

GHOST: Just who do you think you are? Ghost to ghost, I had been haunting th... a couple of centuries before you ever appeared.

JEAN: Atta girl, Hannah.

GHOST: This is my house and these are my friends. And we're going to stay because we like it here.

SECOND GHOST: But I, too, have fought to this house. Behold my portrait, on the wall hanging. I am the ghost of Hilda Von B...

JEAN: Hosts couldn't get this thing settled before we app... sister and I are just two mortals trying to have a little vacation in the mountains.

SECOND GHOST: Darkness is falling, and you mortals will soon be under my power. As for you, Hannah Warburton, you cannot die again, but I will see to it that you suffer terrible agonies.

GHOST: Nonsense!

JEAN: Pooh! You can't scare me, either. I'm staying.

TERRY (*clinging to her sister*): And me, too.

SECOND GHOST (*advancing toward the middle of the floor*):

Perhaps the trouble iss that there are not enough ghosts to haunt this house. Maybe there should be a few more ghosts, yet. Perhaps I can remedy this little difficulty, yes? (*Pulling a gun out of her side pocket.*) Put up your hands, all of you.

JEAN (*putting up her hands*): It would seem that this ghost carries a decidedly modern gun.

GHOST (*putting up her hands with the chains still about her wrists*): I wish I had Uncle Cyril's musket right now. The one that he carried all during the Revolutionary War.

SECOND GHOST: Stop chattering, Hannah Warburton. And as for you, rash and stupid mortals, I'll teach you not to trifl with spirits of the underworld. Get into that corner, all of you.

GHOST: Have courage, mortals. After you're ghosts, I can teach you all the tricks of the trade.

TERRY: I'm afraid I'm not going to be able to figure out the end of this detective story, much less write it.

JEAN: Too bad, when for the first time in your life you could give an eyewitness account.

SECOND GHOST: Be quiet, all of you! Your senseless noise irritates me. And prepare to meet your doom.

TERRY (*putting her hand to her head*): I feel faint. I don't believe that I can stand much longer. (*She falls to the floor*.)

JEAN (*bending over her*): Terry!

[*The Ghost of Hilda Von Bock, taken by surprise at Terry's fainting, lowers her gun ever so slightly in a moment of indecision. At this point, the Ghost to Hannah Warburton strips her chains off her wrists and throws them at Hilda's head. Hilda staggers.*]

GHOST (*leaping forward to grab Hilda*): Help me, Jean.

SECOND GHOST (*moaning and rubbing her forehead*): Ach!

Something has hit me, yes?

JEAN: Good work, Hannah. You ~~had~~ ^{had} time I get a sheet to tie her up.

GHOST (*hanging onto Hilda and extracting the gun from her hand*): I think I knocked her unconscious. Here's her gun.

TERRY (*rising up*): You keep her covered with the gun, Jean, while I tear the sheets. (*Starts stripping the sheets off the divan*.)

JEAN: Why, Terry. I thought you'd fainted.

TERRY: No, I was only pretending in order to throw Hilda off the track.

GHOST: Good girl, Terry.

TERRY: Here, Hannah. You tie her hands and I'll get her feet.

GHOST: That's it. Now she can't possibly get away. Girls, we haven't a moment to lose. We must get this woman to the police at once. She's a spy, a dangerous spy.

JEAN: A spy!

TERRY: I began to wonder if she was really a ghost.

GHOST: Of course not. She wanted this house for her headquarters so that she and her friends could blow up munitions plants and commit other acts of sabotage in territory all around here. Oh, I was on to their dirty little game. (*going through Hilda's pockets.*) See! Here's her book with the lists in it.

JEAN (*looking at the book over Hannah's shoulder*): It seems to be columns of crazy figures and the names of towns around here.

TERRY: Probably the secret agents are known by the numbers and the jobs they're supposed to pull are indicated by the towns.

GHOST: Right! And there are even dates to go with them. The sooner we get this book into the hands of the FBI, the better.

JEAN: By the way, Hannah. Would you mind explaining just who *you* are?

TERRY: Yes. I have an idea you're not a ghost, either.

GHOST: As a matter of fact, you're right. Did you ever hear of H. H. Van Spine, the writer of detective stories?

TERRY: My greatest rival in the field of detective fiction! But I always thought you were a man.

GHOST: And I always thought *you* were a man, too, Terry Norton.

JEAN: But I still don't understand why you're here.

GHOST: Well, about three weeks ago, I got an idea for a new book about a ghost. Naturally, I'd never had much experience with ghosts, so I thought I'd try being one—just to get at the psychology, you know.

JEAN: I began to think you were a little out of character once or twice. Ham sandwiches, for example.

TERRY: But how does Hilda come into this?

GHOST: Imagine my surprise when I got here to find the place already haunted—by the Ghost of Hilda Von Bock.

TERRY: I see. Trying to scare away the superstitious villagers, I presume.

GHOST: Exactly. And when she found I wouldn't be chased away, she tried to haunt *me*. We two took to playing a double haunting game. My very life was in danger, but I decided to hang on. It wasn't long before I discovered that she was a spy in the employ of the Nazi government. Imagine my joy when you appeared!

TERRY: But why hadn't you informed the police before this?

HOST: Because I wanted this book, which contains a full list of Hilda's confederates. If she had ever discovered that the police were on her trail, she would have escaped and taken her evidence with her.

TERRY: I've got to hand it to you. You've got brains and courage, Hannah. And also one of the best plots for a detective story I've seen in ages. I congratulate you.

HOST: See here. How about our writing this up together?

TERRY: Oh, no. It's your story and you have a right to it all by yourself.

HOST: But why couldn't we rivals collaborate for a change instead of carving into each other's profits?

JEAN: I think it's a good idea, Terry. But how about the Great American Novel?

TERRY: Somehow I've lost interest. But if Hannah really wants me in on this, we can dump Hilda in our car outside, and take her to the police station. And then when we come back, all three of us can set out to write the Great American Detective story.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE FAMILY TREE

By WINIFRED ANNE

CHARACTERS

JUDGE DUFFY

SHERIFF JACOBS

BRUCE STILES

BARBARA PHIPPS

MRS. PHIPPS, *Barbara's mother*

GRANDMA PHIPPS, *Barbara's grandmother*

ETHELBERT PHIPPS, *Barbara's father*

Time: The play will act about thirty minutes.

Place: Any small town in America.

COSTUMES

The clothes are all modern. For the judge you can use a graduation gown.

PROPERTIES

High desk; large table; several long benches. Lamps, either floor or desk. Newspaper, magazines, books. Knitting outfit.

LIGHTING

Though the lighting is just ordinary, the one in charge of it will have to pay attention to the scene of the storm. The timing with the lines will have to be perfect. Lightning effect can be produced by turning a flashlight on and off rapidly.

Both 'flash-backs' are at night. The lighting of lamps can indicate that.

NOTES

The thunder can be suggested with a drum or by the noise made with a large piece of tin.

Lightning and thunder will have to be timed carefully to synchronize with the action and lines.

SCENE

The small courtroom of the Fordville Town Hall. It is ten o'clock in the morning.

Back center is a high desk facing downstage. To the left of the desk is a witness stand. To the right of the desk is a large table. Stage right are several long benches. The entrance door is stage right. Stage left is a door leading to the jail.

The changing of the scenes after the blackouts necessitates only bringing in a couch and some easy chairs and taking out the benches. You might also push the court room furniture up stage, set the new pieces in the front and turn your lights front stage only keeping the back where the court room furniture is in the dark.

THE PLAY

When the curtain rises, six people are on the stage. Judge Duffy sits at the desk, back center. Bruce Stiles, a personable young fellow, sits at the upstage end of one of the benches, stage right. His right hand is bandaged.

At the downstage end of this bench sits Barbara Phipps, a pretty girl. On the bench directly behind Barbara sit Mrs. Phipps, Barbara's mother, and Grandma Phipps, Barbara's grandmother. From the attitude of these three women it is apparent that they have no use for Bruce Stiles.

Standing to one side of the Judge's desk is Sheriff Jacobs.

JUDGE (rapping on the desk with his gavel): Silence! Silence, please! The court will please come to order! I wish to remind you that this case has had to be three times postponed because of the unruly demonstrations of the people in court. (He pauses, steps down from his desk, walks straight down to

the footlights, talks to the audience.) Just let me say now that if there is any noise, any unseemly conduct, I shall ask to have the court cleared. (He looks belligerently at the audience.) Is that understood? (After he has waited a moment for an answer.) Good!

SHERIFF *(to the audience):* And that applies to everybody in this courtroom. *(Pointing to the audience.)* To you! you! and you! So just behave yourselves!

JUDGE: Let's get on with the trial, Sheriff! *(Judge Duffy starts back to his place.)*

SHERIFF: Yes, your honor.

JUDGE *(as he sits at his desk):* Bring in the prisoner.

SHERIFF: Yes, your honor. *(Exit Sheriff Jacobs, by the door, left.)*

BRUCE *(who has been trying to attract Barbara's attention):* Barbara! Barbara! *(Barbara turns away from Bruce.)*

BRUCE: Barbara! *(He moves along the bench towards her.)* Won't you let me explain?

BARBARA: No!

BRUCE: I didn't want them to put your father in jail.

BARBARA: I don't want to listen to you!

BRUCE: But you must listen!

MRS. PHIPPS: Can't you understand? My daughter doesn't want to talk to you!

GRANDMA *(to Mrs. Phipps):* What's that, Effie?

MRS. PHIPPS: It's nothing, Mother.

GRANDMA *(holds up an ear-trumpet):* Eh?

MRS. PHIPPS *(in a loud tone):* I said it's nothing!

GRANDMA: Nothing? Never heard anyone talking about nothing before! Are you keeping something from me, Effie?

MRS. PHIPPS: No; not a thing!

BRUCE: Barbara! I'm terribly sorry this had to happen.

BARBARA: So am I!

GRANDMA: What's that young scamp saying to her, Effie?

MRS. PHIPPS *(patiently):* He wants to explain.

GRANDMA: What's that? Complain? What right's he got to complain?

BRUCE: Mrs. Phipps, won't you use your influence with your daughter? This whole thing is absurd! I can explain everything.

MRS. PHIPPS *(haughtily):* Suppose you explain to the Judge, young man!

BRUCE: But—it's all a mistake! (*Mrs. Phipps ignores Bruce.*)

GRANDMA: What's that? Did he say a steak, Effie? I could eat a steak, I'm so hungry!

JUDGE: Silence! (*He raps on the desk.*)

[*Sheriff Jacobs re-enters. With him is Mr. Phipps, a timid appearing little man. The three women wave to Mr. Phipps as he enters.*]

SHERIFF: Sit down, Phipps. (*He indicates a chair next to the table. Phipps, after nodding at his family, sits in the chair.*)

GRANDMA: He looks kind of pale, Effie!

SHERIFF: We're all ready, your honor.

JUDGE: That's fine! fine! (*The Judge adjusts his glasses, reads some papers before him.*) Now let me see. . . .

GRANDMA: Eh? A fine? Already? (*Turns to Mrs. Phipps.*) How much is it, Effie?

MRS. PHIPPS: It isn't a fine, Mother.

GRANDMA: Think we'll have to mortgage the place?

BARBARA: Granny, please be quiet.

SHERIFF: Silence, you!

GRANDMA (*holds her trumpet towards the sheriff*): How's that?

SHERIFF: I said, silence!

GRANDMA: Oh! (*Nods.*) All right, sonny!

SHERIFF (*glares at Grandma. Then he turns to Mrs. Phipps.*): You'd better see to it that she behaves herself.

MRS. PHIPPS: It's all right, sheriff; I'll be responsible for her. She won't cause any commotion.

GRANDMA: Motion? Motion? Did you make a motion, Effie?

BARBARA: Granny, please!

GRANDMA (*raises her hand*): I second the motion! Whatever it is!

JUDGE: Order! Order! (*He pounds on the desk.*)

MRS. PHIPPS: It's all right, Mother; now just be quiet.

JUDGE: Now then, Sheriff! What are the charges against the prisoner?

SHERIFF: The prisoner is charged with chasing this young man —(*he points to Bruce*) with a loaded shot-gun, of firing said gun at said young man, and of wounding said young man's right hand.

GRANDMA: I wish I had fired that gun!

JUDGE: What did you say?

GRANDMA: I'd have hit him where it really hurts—by Jingol!

JUDGE (*again pounds on his desk*): Silence! If you say one more

word out of turn, I'll fine you for contempt of court. (*He turns to the audience.*) And I must ask the spectators in this courtroom to refrain from any further noise!

BRUCE (*rises*): Your honor?

JUDGE: Sit down!

BRUCE (*sits*): Yes, your honor.

JUDGE: Mr. Phipps, you have heard the charges. Do you plead guilty or not guilty?

MR. PHIPPS (*in a mouse-like voice*): G—guilty, your honor, I guess.

JUDGE: You guess? Don't you know?

MR. PHIPPS: Well, not exactly, your honor.

BRUCE (*again rises*): If it please the court.

SHERIFF: Sit down!

BRUCE: But, your honor!

JUDGE: Young man! Sit down!

BRUCE (*sits*): Yes, sir.

JUDGE: Go on, Mr. Phipps.

PHIPPS: You see, I've been in jail overnight, and I've had time to think things over.

JUDGE: Yes; I'm told that a great many people have the same experience.

PHIPPS: And I really think that I'm guilty—I guess.

JUDGE: The court will determine your guilt, Mr. Phipps. All I want to know is this: do you plead guilty, or not guilty?

MR. PHIPPS (*dubiously*): Well, it's like this, your honor. I've never spent a night in jail before, and—

JUDGE: Answer the court's question! Did you or did you not shoot this man?

PHIPPS: Well. . . . I guess so.

JUDGE: The defendant pleads guilty.

BRUCE (*rises*): Your honor?

JUDGE (*sighs*): What is it?

BRUCE: I've decided not to press charges.

JUDGE: Not press charges?

BARBARA: Oh, Bruce!

SHERIFF: But this man tried to shoot you, son.

BRUCE: Yes, I know that.

JUDGE: In fact, he did shoot you.

BRUCE (*feels his right hand*): I know that, too!

SHERIFF: Do you know what that makes him?

BRUCE: No, sir.

SHERIFF: That makes him a criminal—don't it, Judge?

PHIPPS (*in automatic fashion*): Doesn't it?

SHERIFF: Well, doesn't it, Judge?

MRS. PHIPPS: My husband is not a criminal! (*She rises.*) And don't you dare call him one!

JUDGE: Now just a minute, M'am.

GRANDMA: And don't call him a ham, neither!

BARBARA: Be still, Grandmother!

MRS. PHIPPS: If my husband tried to shoot Bruce Stiles, it's because he had a very good reason!

GRANDMA: You tell 'em, Effie!

JUDGE: Silence, please! (*He raps sharply.*) Silence! (*He turns to Bruce.*) Go on, Mr. Stiles.

BRUCE: Well, your honor, Barbara—that is, Miss Phipps—and I were engaged to be married.

JUDGE: You were?

BRUCE: Yes, sir. That's why I can't very well press charges against her father.

JUDGE: I see. How long had you known the young lady?

BRUCE: Oh, a long time, sir.

JUDGE: Are you and she no longer engaged?

BRUCE: I'm not sure, your honor.

JUDGE: Nobody seems to be sure of anything this morning.

BARBARA (*rises*): Your honor! You may tell Mr. Stiles that our engagement is a thing of the past!

BRUCE: Barbara!

PHIPPS: Now, Barbara, don't go losing your temper.

MRS. PHIPPS: Let her do just as she pleases!

GRANDMA: You tell 'em, Effie!

SHERIFF: Just a minute! Just a minute!

JUDGE (*pounding for order*): The court will please come to order!

JUDGE: Apparently, there's more to this than meets the eye. Mr. Stiles, this man admits that he shot you. Yet you refuse to press charges. Is that right?

BRUCE: Yes, sir.

JUDGE: Why did he shoot you? Did you have a fight?

BRUCE: No, sir. It was just a misunderstanding.

JUDGE: It was? (*Bruce nods.*) Let me remind you, Mr. Stiles, that the path of true justice must not be obstructed by sentiment.

BRUCE: What do you mean, sir?

JUDGE: Well, before I let you drop these charges, I want some reasonable explanation.

BRUCE: Explanation?

JUDGE: Yes! Why did that man shoot you?

BRUCE: I really don't know.

JUDGE: You don't know? (*Judge Duffy and Sheriff Jacobs look at one another, then at Bruce.*)

BRUCE: No, sir.

SHERIFF: You must have some idea.

BRUCE: I haven't—I haven't any idea.

JUDGE: Mr. Phipps, can you throw any light on the matter?

PHIPPS: Well. . . .

JUDGE: Can you tell us why you tried to shoot your future son-in-law?

PHIPPS: Well, your honor, I guess I can. Shall I start at the beginning?

JUDGE: I believe it's customary.

PHIPPS: It all started when Bruce sold me some lightning protection.

JUDGE: Ah! go on, Mr. Phipps.

MRS. PHIPPS: Only it wasn't lightning protection at all.

BRUCE: Oh, but it was!

BARBARA: It was not!

GRANDMA: Give it to 'em, Granddaughter!

JUDGE: Order! (*He raps on the desk.*) You will refrain from speaking out of turn! Continue, Mr. Phipps.

PHIPPS: Well, sir, one day—

[Blackout. The stage remains dark for several moments to give the actors a chance to re-arrange the furniture. When the lights go up, only the downstage end of the stage is used for an acting area.]

Barbara and Mr. Phipps sit on a sofa. Bruce stands before them, talking.

BRUCE: But I tell you, Mr. Phipps, every house ought to have lightning protection.

PHIPPS: I agree with you, Bruce!

BARBARA: And so do I!

PHIPPS: But I still don't understand why you want to put the protection in a tree. Why don't you put it on the house?

BRUCE: I've just explained why: it's a new principle of lightning protection.

PHIPPS: It is?

BRUCE: Yes! Take that large tree in your north yard. It towers way over your house.

PHIPPS: That's true.

BRUCE: By putting the lightning protection in the tree, you automatically protect a cone-shaped area that will include the house.

BARBARA: Don't you see, Dad? Lightning will strike the tree first.

PHIPPS: Why?

BRUCE: Because it's the tallest thing around here! That's why!

PHIPPS: I think I'm beginning to see what you're driving at.

BRUCE: Mr. Phipps! What would happen if that tree were struck by lightning now?

PHIPPS: Now?

BRUCE: This very minute!

PHIPPS: Why, that's impossible! There's no storm.

BRUCE: But if there were a storm!

PHIPPS: Well, I suppose the tree would fall!

BRUCE: Exactly! And where would it fall?

PHIPPS: On the house.

BRUCE: Ah! then you admit it?

BARBARA: There, Dad, don't you see? It might fall on the house.

PHIPPS: True!

BRUCE: Yes, it might. However, by putting this special equipment in the tree, you will protect both the house and the tree.

PHIPPS: Is that so?

BRUCE: Of course! With the proper equipment, any bolt lightning that hits the tree will be instantly conducted feet below the ground.

PHIPPS: Well, there's no denying that ten feet are better than six feet! Ha, ha!

BARBARA (*dryly*): Ha, ha.

BRUCE: Ha!

PHIPPS: How much does this protection cost, Bruce?

BRUCE: Only twenty-five dollars.

PHIPPS: Well! (*He rises, walks back and forth. Barbara and Bruce watch him anxiously.*) Well. . . .

BRUCE: It's a real investment.

BARBARA: After all, Dad, you wouldn't want anything to happen to the house.

PHIPPS: Say! Just who is selling me this equipment, you or your future husband?

BARBARA: Bruce is, of course. I only wanted to point out—

PHIPPS: You're right, Daughter! Absolutely right! (*He turns to Bruce.*) And I'll buy it!

BRUCE (*overjoyed*): You mean . . . you'll buy it?

BARBARA: Oh, Dad!

PHIPPS: Yes! I've been thinking of it for a long time now, ever since a fellow down at the firehouse tried to sell me some lightning rods.

BRUCE: I see.

PHIPPS: But I think it's better to keep the business in the family!

BRUCE: Gee, thanks!

PHIPPS (*shakes hands with Bruce*): Young man, congratulations! You're a fine salesman!

BARBARA: He certainly is!

BRUCE: Oh, thanks, Mr. Phipps—thanks a lot!

PHIPPS: Not at all! Not at all!

BRUCE: I'll have the work done tomorrow; and you'll never regret it.

PHIPPS: There's just one thing I want to know: you're sure that this equipment works?

BRUCE: Why, Mr. Phipps! You don't think I'd sell you anything that wasn't on the level?

PHIPPS: Well, anything that's up a tree can hardly be on the level! Ha, ha!

BARBARA: Dad! you should know Bruce well enough by now—

PHIPPS (*raises his hands*): I know! I know! I'm merely asking if the equipment is safe.

BRUCE: It's so safe, Mr. Phipps, that after it's installed you can sit in that tree during a thunder storm—and not be in any danger!

PHIPPS: Is that the truth?

BRUCE: As long as you don't sit near the wire.

PHIPPS: Good! I'll remember that!

[Blackout. When the lights go up again we see the courtroom. Mr. Phipps is standing up in the witness stand, telling his story.

PHIPPS: And that, your honor, is how I came to buy the equipment.

JUDGE: I understand.

PHIPPS: The next morning a couple of men came to our place, and installed it.

JUDGE: In other words, Mr. Phipps, you bought this lightning protection in good faith.

PHIPPS: Yes, sir.

JUDGE: Well, what happened? A normal person doesn't go around shooting people just because he's bought something from them.

MRS. PHIPPS: My husband had every right to shoot that young man!

SHERIFF: Quiet, lady!

GRANDMA: What'd he say, Effie?

BARBARA: It's nothing, Granny.

JUDGE (*knocks for order*): That will do!

BRUCE (*rises*): If it please the court—

JUDGE (*motioning him to sit down*): Well, it doesn't please the court!

SHERIFF: So sit down!

BRUCE: Yes, sir. (*He sits down.*)

JUDGE: To get back to our tale, Mr. Phipps—

GRANDMA: Jail? Did he say jail, Effie?

SHERIFF: Hey, you! Pipe down!

MRS. PHIPPS: It's all right, Mother.

JUDGE: Mr. Phipps, I still don't understand why you tried to shoot your future son-in-law.

PHIPPS: I must have been out of my head, your honor, er, crazy! You know how that is.

JUDGE: Naturally. (*Quickly catches himself.*) What do you mean?

PHIPPS: Oh, no offense meant your honor. What I was trying to say was that something snapped inside me.

JUDGE: Wasn't the equipment satisfactory?

PHIPPS: Well, yes—and no!

JUDGE: See here, Mr. Phipps! I'm getting pretty tired of your vague answers! I want a straightforward answer to my question!

PHIPPS: I can't answer that way, your honor, because of what happened.

JUDGE: In that case, supposing you tell us just what happened.

PHIPPS: Very well. One evening we had just finished dinner, and we were getting settled in the living room, when—

[*Blackout. This time it is accompanied by a peal of thunder and several flashes of lightning. The lights go up on Mrs.*

Phipps, Grandma Phipps, Mr. Phipps, and Barbara. All four are comfortably seated, apparently settling down for the evening.

Note: throughout this scene we hear the rumble of thunder, and we see intermittent flashes of lightning. The storm grows worse as the scene progresses.

MRS. PHIPPS (*who is looking at a magazine*): Sounds like a real thunder storm.

PHIPPS (*absorbed in his evening newspaper*): Uh-huh!

BARBARA: Well, we don't have to worry about it, not now. (*She resumes her reading of a book.*)

MRS. PHIPPS: I should say not! It's a good thing you had that lightning protection installed, dear.

PHIPPS (*continues reading*): Uh-huh.

MRS. PHIPPS (*laughs*): When your father gets interested in his newspaper, nothing can shake him.

BARBARA: Perhaps I take after father.

MRS. PHIPPS: He just sits there and grunts; I'm sure he hasn't heard a word I've been saying. Ethelbert!

PHIPPS: Uh-huh.

MRS. PHIPPS: I said it's a good thing we had those lightning rods installed.

GRANDMA (*who has been knitting*): What say, Effie? Somebody's car just stalled?

PHIPPS (*looking up*): Whose car stalled?

MRS. PHIPPS: Nobody's car stalled!

PHIPPS: Oh.

GRANDMA: Who is he, a friend of ours?

BARBARA: It's all right, Granny.

GRANDMA: Somebody you know, Bertie? Well. . . . (*Resumes her knitting.*) I hope the poor fellow can get started.

PHIPPS (*to Grandma*): Mother! I wish you'd pay more attention to our conversation!

GRANDMA: How's that, Bertie?

PHIPPS (*sighs*): Nothing.

[At this moment there is a particularly loud peal of thunder.]

MRS. PHIPPS: Mercy!

PHIPPS: Mmm . . . quite a storm. You know, Martha, it's a good thing I had that lightning protection installed.

MRS. PHIPPS: Yes, it is. That's what I've been trying to tell you for the last five minutes.

PHIPPS: You have?

MRS. PHIPPS: Yes.

PHIPPS: Funny! I didn't hear you.

[*There is another loud peal of thunder.*

BARBARA: This is a *real* storm.

GRANDMA: Is that somebody knocking at the front door?

MRS. PHIPPS: No, Mother—it's thunder!

GRANDMA: Oh. (*After a thoughtful pause.*) Well, what does he want?

MRS. PHIPPS (*in a loud tone*): It's nobody! And he doesn't want a thing!

GRANDMA: Poor fellow! Just give him some of that meat that was left over from dinner. (*She resumes her knitting.*)

BARBARA: I wish Granny would use her ear trumpet.

MRS. PHIPPS: She claims she doesn't need it.

BARBARA: Well, perhaps she's right.

MRS. PHIPPS: It's too bad Bruce had to go away on a trip, dear. I know you must miss him.

BARBARA: Oh, it's only for a week, Mother; I really don't mind—

[*At this point there is a terrific clap of thunder and several flashes of lightning. The lights go off momentarily.*

MRS. PHIPPS: Heavens!

BARBARA: What's happened to the lights.

PHIPPS: There's a line down somewhere, I guess.

[*There is another clap of thunder.*

GRANDMA: Come in!

[*The lights go up again.*

PHIPPS: Say! this is a bad storm!

MRS. PHIPPS: The worst we've had this summer.

PHIPPS: Well, I'm glad we're protected. Lightning can't strike the house now.

BARBARA: Oh, no Dad, you're wrong! If lightning should strike the tree in the north yard, then it can't strike the house.

PHIPPS: What—what's that?

BARBARA: It's the tree that has the protection.

PHIPPS: That's true, Daughter, but—(*Perplexed, he scratches his head.*) I thought Bruce said. . . .

MRS. PHIPPS: Ethelbert! Do you mean that this house isn't protected?

PHIPPS: Of course it's protected! It's a scientific principle based on—well, on other scientific principles.

MRS. PHIPPS: Are you sure?

PHIPPS: Why, of course! By protecting the tree we automatically protect—er—a sort of polygon, I mean an isosceles triangle.

PHIPPS: Perfectly safe!

[Just then there is an extremely loud clap of thunder and several flashes of lightning. The lights go out.]

PHIPPS: Or . . . are we safe?

BARBARA: The lights!

MRS. PHIPPS: Heavens!

GRANDMA: What say, Effie?

[Another loud clap of thunder is heard. The room remains in darkness.]

PHIPPS: Say! that was too close for comfort!

MRS. PHIPPS: Ethelbert! Are you sure this house is safe?

PHIPPS: Well, I guess so—I mean—I hope so.

BARBARA: But, Dad, we can't stay here if it's not safe!

PHIPPS: Well, we're not sure it's not safe!

MRS. PHIPPS: Yes; but we're not sure it's safe either.

[There is another clap of thunder and then another. This continues uninterruptedly. The storm seems to be right over the house.]

PHIPPS: Let me see. Bruce said that—by George! he did say it, too!

MRS. PHIPPS: Say what, dear?

PHIPPS: That the safest place to be during a storm was up in that tree!

BARBARA: Oh, there must be some mistake!

MRS. PHIPPS: But I can't climb that tree!

PHIPPS: Oh, yes you can!

BARBARA: What do you mean, Dad?

PHIPPS: I mean we're not taking any chances; we're all going to climb the tree in the north yard.

MRS. PHIPPS: But, Ethelbert!

BARBARA: What about Granny?

PHIPPS: Granny too!

MRS. PHIPPS: But we'll get wet!

PHIPPS: That's better than being struck by lightning. Come on!

GRANDMA: Why is it so dark in here? Can't somebody turn the lights on?

BARBARA: Come along, Granny!

GRANDMA: What's that? Who's that pulling on my arm?

BARBARA: It's Barbara! We're going out!

GRANDMA: What say?

BARBARA: Out!

GRANDMA: I know they're out! I want 'em turned on again!

BARBARA: No, no! We're going out!

GRANDMA: Out? What for?

BARBARA: We're going to climb a tree!

GRANDMA: What say, climb a tree? Granddaughter, do you feel well?

PHIPPS: Just wait until I see that young man! I'll give him a good talking to!

MRS. PHIPPS: It's ridiculous! Will we have to climb a tree every time there's a thunder storm?

PHIPPS: Well, we can talk about that later. Come on, hurry!

[We hear the closing of a door. Then we hear the pealing of thunder fade gradually. When the lights go up, we see the courtroom.

PHIPPS: And that's how this whole thing started, your honor.

JUDGE: Fantastic! Do you mean to say that the four of you had to climb a tree just to be safe during the storm?

PHIPPS: Yes, your honor. And I needn't point out that it was a most difficult task.

JUDGE: How long were you in the tree?

PHIPPS: Until the storm died down—about two hours.

MRS. PHIPPS: And we all caught terrible colds, your honor—all except mother.

SHERIFF (aside): Well, she's kind of a tough old bird.

JUDGE: And was that the only time you were up in the tree?

PHIPPS: Oh, no sir. That was ten days ago. If you remember, your honor, we've been having violent electrical storms all week.

JUDGE: Do you mean that every time there was a thunder storm, the four of you dashed out of the house and climbed up the tree?

PHIPPS: Well, we did for the first part of the week. After that, we were so exhausted we simply didn't care.

MRS. PHIPPS: And not only that, Judge, but one morning we were all sitting on the lower limb when the storm suddenly stopped. Every person in our neighborhood came out to see us.

BARBARA: It was too humiliating!

MRS. PHIPPS: Why! people must have thought we were crazy!

JUDGE: I see.

BRUCE: Your honor?

JUDGE: Just a minute, young man! (Turns to Mr. Phipps.) Under the circumstances I can't help but feel deeply sympathetic

towards you, Mr. Phipps. However, nothing can justify the attempt to shoot another human being.

PHIPPS: Well, I guess I sort of lost my head. Yesterday morning, after we'd all been through so much, the doorbell rang. I answered it. It was Bruce.

JUDGE: Go on.

PHIPPS: And the first thing he said was, "How does it feel to have lightning protection?" Well, I just picked up my shotgun and went after him.

JUDGE: Perfectly understandable, Mr. Phipps.

PHIPPS: After all, your honor, a man can stand just so much!

BRUCE: Your honor!

JUDGE: Young man! I hope what you have to say will throw some light on the matter.

BRUCE: I think it will, sir. In the first place, it wasn't at all necessary for Mr. Phipps and his family to leave their house and climb that tree.

JUDGE: That's what I thought. In other words, the house was protected all the time.

BRUCE: Yes, sir. The lightning protection I sell has been tested and approved by a nationally-known organization.

MRS. PHIPPS: Can you prove that, Bruce?

BRUCE: Yes, I can.

JUDGE: So can I! It happens that my house is protected by the same system.

BARBARA: Then—we were wrong.

JUDGE: Yes, you were wrong.

BRUCE: I'm very sorry you and your family were put to any inconvenience, Mr. Phipps.

PHIPPS: Well, I'm sorry, too, Bruce. I didn't mean to lose my temper.

JUDGE: Well, that's fine! (*To Bruce.*) I presume you still wish to withdraw the charges?

BRUCE: Yes, sir.

SHERIFF: That's the spirit!

JUDGE: Before I dismiss this case, I should like to ask you two young people not to allow an obvious misunderstanding to mar your future happiness.

BARBARA: Oh, we won't, your honor!

JUDGE: Good! (*He turns to Mr. Phipps.*) And I wish to remind you, Mr. Phipps, that chasing people with a shotgun isn't the best way of expressing one's disapproval.

PHIPPS: I'm sorry, your honor.

JUDGE (*raps on the desk*): Case dismissed! (*He turns to Bruce and Barbara.*) You two young people will be happy, I hope.

BRUCE: Thank you, sir.

GRANDMA: Eh? A dope? What's that? (*Turns to Mrs. Phipps.*)

Did you hear him call me a dope, Effie?

CURTAIN

THE MUMMY'S FOOT

(A radio play, based on a short story by the French writer,
Theophile Gautier.)

BY RICHARD HUBBELL

CHARACTERS

DICK FORSYTHE }
JERRY HOWE } *two very young American Soldiers in
Egypt, on their first furlough abroad*

SHOPKEEPER, *a very old Egyptian, who speaks with a hissing
politeness*

PRINCESS USAPHAIS (*pronounced You-saa-fay-is*), *whose voice
is warm, appealing, and dignified*

PHARAOH MENES THE FIRST, *a deep, powerful, booming voice*

PARKES, *an English travel agent*

Time: The second World War.

Place: Summer in Luxor, Egypt.

NOTES

Since this is a radio play it requires no costumes, properties, setting, or lighting. The sound requirements are carefully described by the author.

Should you wish to prepare the work for the stage, you will find the task comparatively simple. The scenery can be copied from any book dealing with a big city in Egypt. The scene of the tombs should be painted on screens which are set on the stage.

The few costumes of the ancient Egyptians can be copied from pictures in books dealing with these times.

THE PLAY

Announcer: The scene is the Egyptian city of Luxor, the city of tombs, on the banks of the River Nile. Two young American soldiers, Dick Forsythe and Jerry Howe, are strolling along a side street in the native quarter. These two boys, who left high school to join the Army, are having their first "leave" on foreign soil, and they have taken the opportunity to journey up the Nile River to Cairo, to see for themselves the wonders of ancient Egypt, about which they studied in school last year. On the recommendation of an English travel agent named Parkes they are looking for a strange little old Egyptian curio shop, rumored to have exceptionally rare relics taken from the tombs of the Pharaohs. Suddenly Dick spies something . . .

DICK (*approaching microphone*): Here it is, Jerry. This is the place I'm looking for.

JERRY: All these antique junk shops look alike, except this one's dirtier than the rest. Look at those cobwebs in the window . . . phooey.

DICK: But behind them . . . see? There's the mummy case and two bronze idols . . . just like Parkes said. This is it.

JERRY: All this walking around, just to find a store that peddles pieces of mummies . . . and what are mummies anyway? Nothing but people who died thousands of years ago and were thoroughly pickled by their friends. Me . . . I like my mummies alive! Yes sir!

DICK: Here's the entrance . . . watch your head.

[*Sound: Door opens, bell jingles. Several steps.*

DICK: Hello . . . hello . . . anyone here?

SHOPKEEPER (*off microphone echoing*): Welcome, Sahib . . . welcome to my humble shop.

DICK: Oh . . . I didn't see you . . . it's dark in here. I was told you had some very interesting old curios for sale.

SHOPKEEPER (*approaching close to microphone*): Very interesting and rare specimens . . . carved mahogany idols from the jungle . . . or perhaps you would like these bits of Chinese porcelain . . . Javanese grotesques . . . these Etruscan lamps. . . .

DICK: No . . . that's not what I was thinking of.

SHOPKEEPER: Perhaps this sacrificial dagger with a blade which undulates like flame?

DICK: Have you any ancient Egyptian relics? Sacred objects . . . or mummies . . . taken from the tombs?

SHOPKEEPER (*pause, then slowly*): Yes . . . I have, if Sahib is sure that is what he wishes.

DICK: Yes . . . that's what I'd like.

SHOPKEEPER: Then come this way . . . (*footsteps*) into my strong room. Sacred relics from tombs must be kept apart, or the gods would be angry . . . yes . . . yes . . . there . . . Sahib, behold! These are from the tombs of the pharaohs, very sacred.

DICK: Where did this gold bracelet come from?

SHOPKEEPER: From the mummy of a mighty pharaoh—Rameses the third.

DICK: This is nice . . . and this ring, too, and—what's in *this* box?

SHOPKEEPER: Oh . . . very sacred token—powerful charm.

DICK: Is that why you keep it locked up? Let me have a look at it.

SHOPKEEPER (*unlocking box*): Very old relic . . . from a tomb near Wadi Maghara. It belongs to the Princess Usaphais.

DICK: Sounds unusual. That's just what I'm looking for. Something out of the way.

SHOPKEEPER: Sahib, gaze upon it.

DICK (*gasp of surprise*): Why, it's a foot . . . broken off at the ankle.

SHOPKEEPER: Touch it.

DICK: It . . . it feels like stone, but it looks exactly like a human foot—a girl's foot.

SHOPKEEPER: You like it? Good. It is very rare . . . it belongs to the mummy of Princess Usaphais, daughter of the Pharaoh Menes.

DICK: Where's the rest of the mummy?

SHOPKEEPER: Who knows? Vandals broke into her tomb. Some of the relics they sold to me, including the mummy of the Princess. It was a most unusual mummy—her jet black hair seemed almost alive, when I unwrapped the shrouds which enfolded her. It was too bad the vandals in their haste had broken off her left foot. But they sold me that, too. I put the mummy in the front of my shop, and locked the foot in my back room in this box. Then something strange happened.

The next morning when I returned, the room was turned upside down. Everything was torn apart. The mummy was missing, but nothing else. This foot, locked in this chest, was not disturbed.

DICK: Did you ever find the mummy again?

SHOPKEEPER: It was never found, but before the week was out the bodies of the thieves were found—dead. That night the dogs had howled in the desert, and the wind blew. The superstitious people of the desert say they were killed by the gods. . . .

DICK: Quite a history, eh! I'll give you five shillings for it.

SHOPKEEPER: Sahib does not believe in gods and devils—and curses.

DICK: No, I don't. It's against Army rules, and it's such a cute little foot . . . couldn't be anything wrong with it.

SHOPKEEPER: Treat it with reverence, Sahib.

DICK: Here's your money, and thank you. Let's go, Jerry. (*Receding.*) Good day. . . .

SHOPKEEPER: Sahib, tell me . . . why do you want this ancient relic? What are you doing to do with it?

DICK (*off mike*): I don't know . . . use it for a paperweight, I guess. So long. (*Door closes.*)

SHOPKEEPER: A paperweight . . . the left foot of the Princess Usaphais . . . (*He chuckles.*) An original idea—an artistic idea—old Pharaoh will be surprised that the foot of his beloved daughter is to become a paperweight . . . (*Chuckles.*) He will not be pleased. The gods will not be pleased. (*Chuckles.*)

[*Fade out.*]

Sound: *Clock chimes ten.*

DICK (*yawning*): Everyone goes to sleep early in these Egyptian hotels, Jerry. (*Yawn.*) Think I'll turn in, too. That English travel agent, Parkes, is coming up early in the morning to go over those maps with us.

JERRY: I know.

DICK (*off*): Hey, you haven't seen my toothbrush any place, have you?

JERRY: Did you look in the bath tub?

DICK (*still off mike*): Not yet.

JERRY: This is a queer looking gadget you brought home this afternoon . . . smells funny too, like perfume.

THE MUMMY'S FOOT

DICK (*approaching*): It's the myrrh and bitumen they used in embalming their mummies.

JERRY: It sure keeps its odor long enough . . . 4000 years!

DICK (*on microphone*): You know, that mummy's foot is supposed to be big magic.

JERRY: Yeah, maybe. That's what all these native medicine men tell you. But a dollar bill will do more magic around here than any left foot, perfumed or otherwise.

DICK (*laughing*): Mind if I open the window and catch some of the breeze that's coming up?

JERRY: Go ahead. I'm turning in, too.

[*Sound: Opening window. Wind blowing.*]

DICK: These windows always stick. They don't make them right in this country. There . . . hey, my papers are blowing off the table. Put the mummy's foot back to hold them down.

JERRY: O.K.

[*Sound: Puts foot down on table. Howling of dogs in distance.*]

JERRY: Listen to those dogs howl.

DICK: Haven't heard them before.

JERRY (*receding*): Where are they . . . in the next street? Throw a shoe at them—your shoe.

DICK: They're further away than the next street. I think they're out in the desert.

JERRY (*off microphone*): Well, they'll get sleepy pretty soon, just like me. (*Yawns.*) Hey, Dick, I found your toothbrush.

DICK: Where was it?

JERRY: Under the bathtub. . . . (*Fade out.*)

[*Music: Dream music sequence fading out.*]

[*Sound: Clock striking three. Sound of light wind and dogs howling in the distance.*]

DICK (*breathes regularly, then disturbed, then awakens*): Uh . . . umm . . . uuuuuuh . . . (*Whispering.*) Jerry . . . Jerry . . . wake up.

JERRY (*whispering*): I am awake, have been for several moments. Did you hear something too?

DICK: I think so . . . but I'm not sure I woke up so peculiarly.

JERRY: Me, too. I sorta slid out of a dream. Ummm, smell that myrrh.

[*Music: Very soft music begins in background. Musical background throughout rest of scene.*]

DICK: It must be that—shhh, listen.

[Sound: Footsteps, measured, heavy, and in slow rhythm, approach slowly with distinct limp as though one foot were a stump of stone.]

JERRY: Footsteps—coming down the hall. . . .

[Sound: The steps suddenly stop.]

DICK: Shhh. It's outside the door.

[Sound: Creaky door opens slowly. Rush of wind. Limping footsteps approach.]

DICK (on filter microphone, speaking his thoughts aloud): The door . . . it's opened. Someone's coming in . . . a girl, with jet black hair, the purest type of Egyptian beauty . . . jewelled bracelets. That golden emblem about her neck . . . her clothes, stiffened shrouds of the dead. She's limping . . . she . . . she has only one foot . . . the left one is gone. . . .

[Sound: Limping footsteps have come closer and gotten louder. Suddenly both footsteps and music stop short.]

JERRY (whispering): Dick . . . she's picking up the mummy's foot . . . and, look, she has no left foot . . . it's not possible. . . .

DICK (aloud): Who are you? What are you doing in here?

[Music: Tingling crash, trailing off into soft, tinkly streamers.]

PRINCESS (off mike, echoing slightly): Who am I? The Princess Usaphais, come to claim my foot. Where did you find it?

DICK: I . . . I bought it in a shop, today, or rather yesterday.

PRINCESS: For years I have been searching for it, to break the charm which held me.

DICK: Charm?

PRINCESS: When the vandals who violated my tomb carried me away they broke off my foot, knowing that without it I could not return to the Hall of the Kings, but must remain among the mortals until I was made whole again. You have found it for me, and to you I am eternally grateful. Take this golden emblem as a token of my gratitude. My father gave it to me forty centuries ago. It is the seal of the Pharaoh.

DICK (awed voice): Forty centuries. . . .

PRINCESS: Now I can return to the shadowy nations of the cities below, and rest in peace until that last day, when our souls must be weighed in the balance of Amenhti. You may come with me—but you can remain for a moment only. My father will receive you kindly, for you have broken the spell that held me. Come, take my hand, both of you.

[Music: Weird music swells up.]

PRINCESS (*over music, voice still echoing*): Everything melts away . . . figures dissolve in the emptiness of time. Only we remain, a blurred mist . . . vague shapes pass by, mountains, rivers, pyramids, and the sands of eternity. Things take shape again . . . we are no longer whirling through space. . . .

[*Music: Fades out abruptly.*]

PRINCESS (*continuing*): We are standing alone in the night . . . the Valley of the Tombs. There are steps, cut into the rock, down . . . down . . .

[*Music: Swells up again, then down under dialogue.*]

PRINCESS: Still we are descending . . .

DICK: We must be hundreds of feet beneath the surface.

JERRY: Interminable corridors cut through solid granite. These must have taken centuries to dig.

PRINCESS: Shhhh. We are here—in the Hall of the Kings, so enormous you cannot see its limits.

DICK: Those monstrous columns stretch up far out of sight . . . great depths of blackness, only a few torches to light the way. . . .

JERRY: Look! There—and there—everywhere—mummies! Some of them moving!

PRINCESS: Here I shall dwell with my ancestors, the kings of the subterranean races. Wise old men, wrapped in their shrouds, their eyes immovably fixed like the eyes of sphinxes, and their long white beards blanched by the snow of centuries. Behind them stand their peoples, and behind them the animals of centuries gone by. All the Pharaohs are here . . . Cheops, Rameses, and Amenotaph . . . all the dark rulers of the pyramids. And on higher thrones sit Chronos, and my father, Menes, who ruled before the deluge. All are here, buried in dreams, awaiting the day of judgment. Come, here is my father's throne. See where he sits on high!

[*Sound: Deep brazen cymbal crash in distance.*]

PRINCESS: Father, I have returned. These mortal men have helped me, and the spell is broken. I am saved.

[*Sound: Cymbal crash in distance.*]

MANY VOICES (*chanting in echoing distance in a half mumble*): The-Princess-Usaphais-has-returned. . . .

MENES (*echoing*): May Isis be praised. You are worthy men. The gods will remember you for this. Have you come to remain here with us in the halls of the dead?

PRINCESS: Father, they are from the land of the living and still breathe.

DICK: Could we stay with you awhile, Princess?

MENES: How old are you?

DICK: We are both eighteen.

MENES: Eighteen—eighteen what?

PRINCESS: Eighteen years, father.

MENES (*with low rumbling laugh*): Eighteen years, and you wish to stay with my daughter who is forty centuries old. No, no, it cannot be. If you were only two thousand years old, I should not mind . . . but eighteen—no, there is too great a difference. That is less than a moment in history. It cannot be. You must return to the land of the living, alone, lest you perish for all time. Perhaps we may meet again, but you must learn to last well. Behold, I am more than four thousand years old, yet my flesh is as solid as basalt, and so it will remain until the last day of the world. My daughter, too, will endure longer than a bronze statue. If you can last as well, we shall welcome you to the Hall of the Kings.

[Sound: Cymbal crash.]

PRINCESS: He is right; it cannot be. The dead and the living must be separate. You must return.

DICK: We shall miss you. I shall miss you . . . very much.

PRINCESS: I too shall yearn for you, and remember you as I sit on my granite throne, down through the remaining centuries into eternity. But I shall wait for you and look for you. Try to come back . . . try to come back. . . . (Fade.)

[Sound: Confused cymbal crashes and music, fading into clock chiming.]

PARKES: Mr. Forsythe, Mr. Howe, wake up . . . wake up.

DICK (*waking*): Uhh . . . ummm. Stop shaking me. Oh, hello, Parkes.

JERRY (*waking*): Ummm . . . urrr. What's the matter? Uhh . . . oh, Parkes. What is it?

PARKES: It's morning, sir. It just struck nine. We have work to do.

DICK: Where am I?

PARKES: In your bed, Mr. Forsythe. I must say you two gentlemen gave me a start. I knocked but you wouldn't wake up. I had to get a passkey and come in. I thought you were dead.

DICK: Dead. . . .

JERRY: I had the queerest dream, Dick.

DICK: So did I. Remember that mummy's foot I got yesterday? Well, the original owner came back to get it.

DICK: And that's not all—

JERRY: I dreamed the same thing.

DICK: What?

JERRY: She came back—the Princess. She was beautiful. She took us down to the hall of—

DICK: Am I crazy or are you? That's what I dreamed.

PARKES: Beg pardon, gentlemen, but last night, when I met you in the restaurant you were discussing mental telepathy, mind reading, thought transference, and the like. Shall I have breakfast served now? It's very late.

DICK: Wait a moment. Let me see that stone foot that's on the table, will you?

PARKES: A foot? Over here? Well, there's a lamp, and some papers, but there's no stone foot here.

DICK } What?
JERRY }

PARKES: No. Just a queer looking golden emblem hung on a golden chain, with some queer Egyptian writing on it.

[*Music: Up and out.*]

